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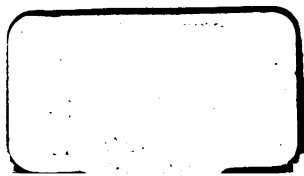
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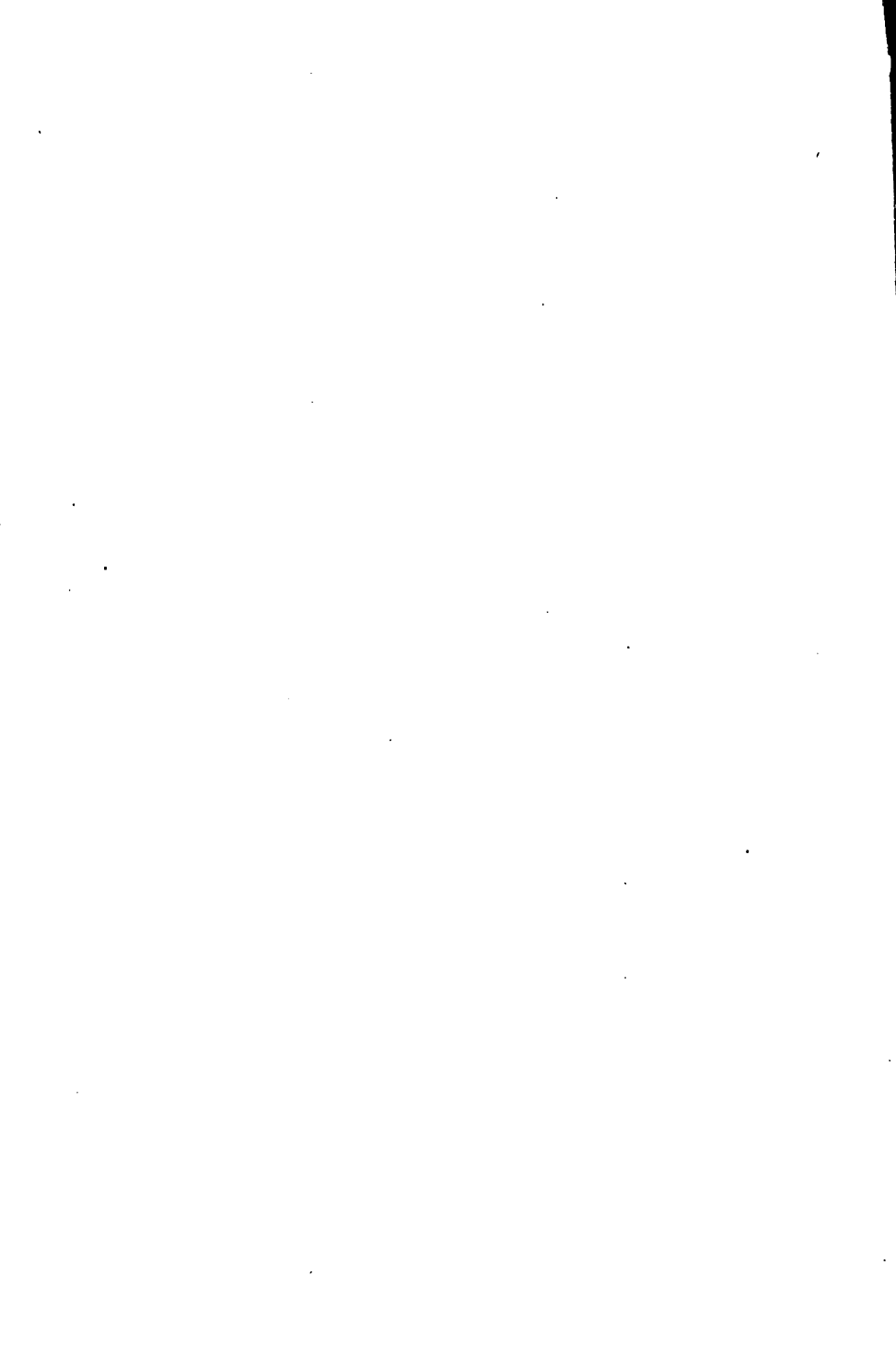
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AT THE FOOT OF
THE ROCKIES
STORIES OF MOUNTAIN AND PLAIN
OR
BOY LIFE ON THE OLD RANCHE
GEORGE H. de laVERGNE

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AT THE FOOT

OF THE

ROCKIES

(STORIES OF MOUNTAIN AND PLAIN)

OR

BOY LIFE ON THE OLD RANCHE

BY

GEORGE H. de la VERGNE

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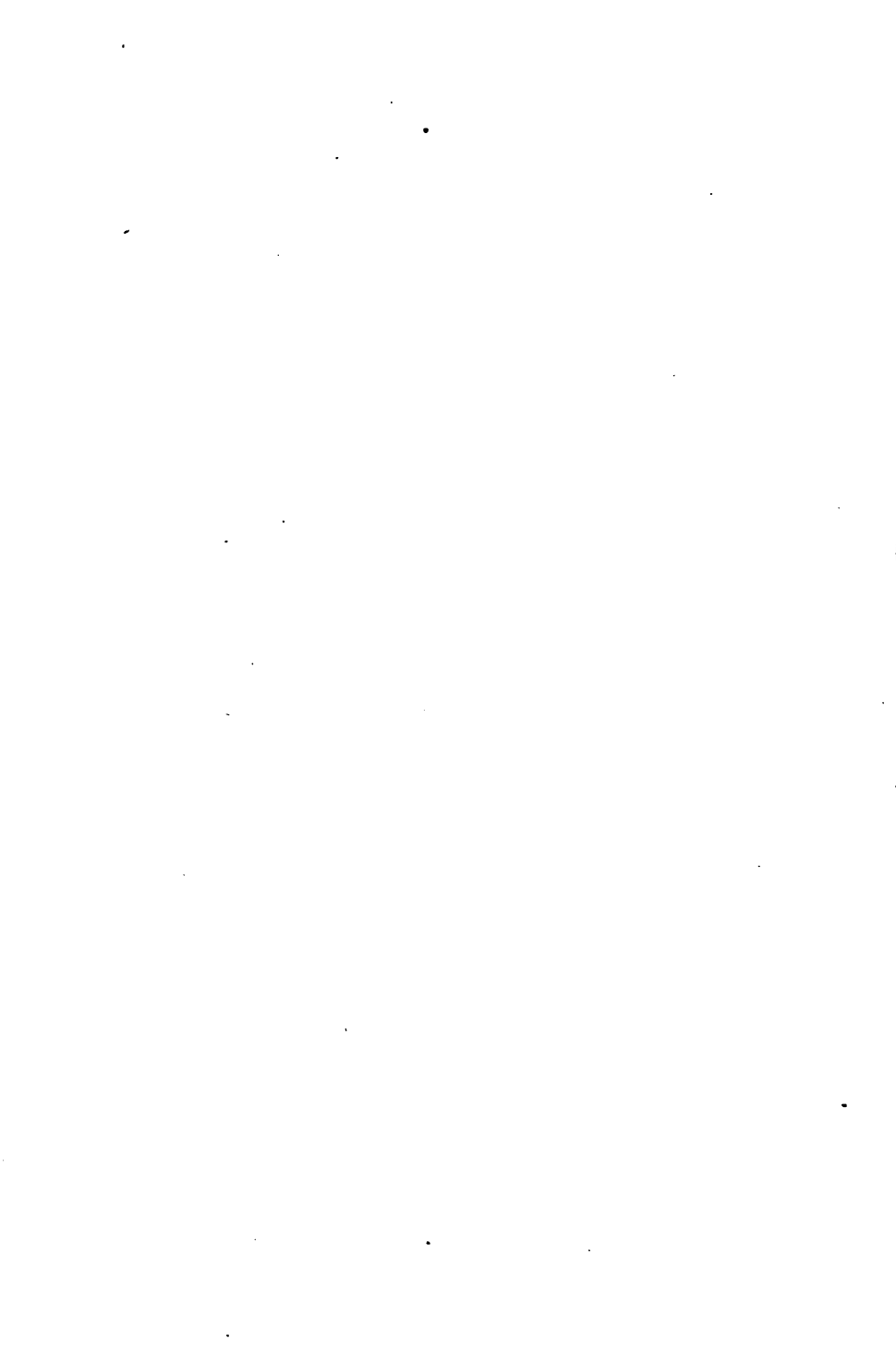
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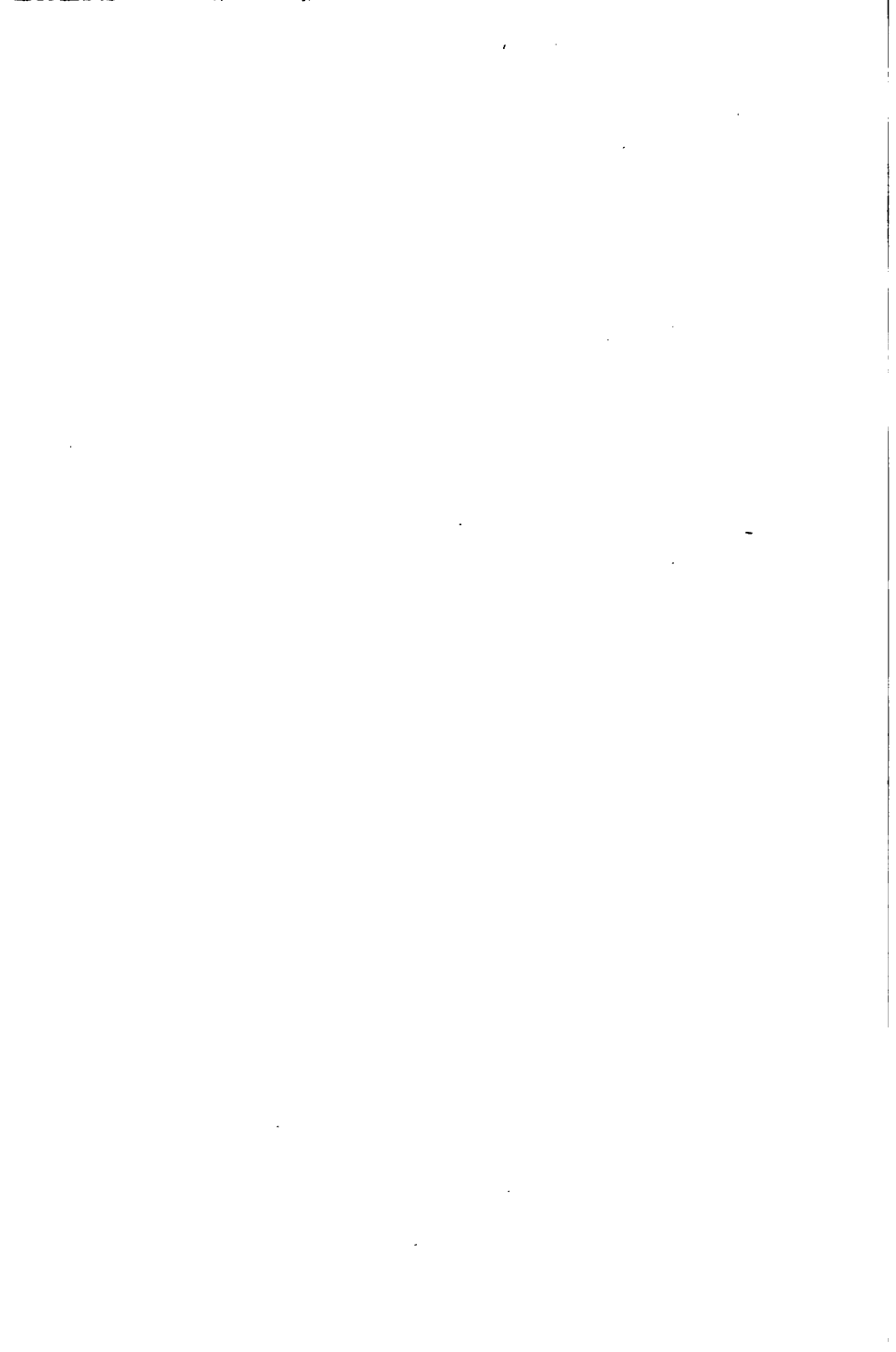
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TO MY UNCLE
Mr. Charles M. Cooke
THIS BOOK
IS DEDICATED



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AT THE FOOT OF THE ROCKIES.

A DAY'S ADVENTURES IN THE MOUNTAINS.

TOM and I were up very early on that autumn morning, as we were going into the mountains to spend the day and wished to get across the intervening plain into their cool abode before the sun got up high enough to be hot. But we were disappointed, for, though Jim Case showed up in time, the other two boys from town, Ed Deven and Will Speer, were late. How anxiously we looked for them. First we climbed up on the fence to get a further look up the road, and then took a still higher stand and scrambled up to the dizzy heights of the windmill; and when we saw two black specks coming down through the railroad cut, we yelled, "Here they come," with that same feeling of delight which you experience when you catch the first glimpse of the circus procession that you have waited for hours in the hot sun to see.

We rushed down the lane. The black collie, who was also a part Newfoundland, came wagging along to welcome the boys, in the firm belief that he was going along to join in the fun.

"Go back, Ben, you can't come," said Tom decisively.

He understood and with drooping tail and bent head, he trotted back, the picture of canine disappointment; after going a short distance, he sat down in the middle of the road and watched us wistfully until we were out of sight.

"You fellers are mighty lazy," said Tom, as we met the two boys at the end of the lane, "we've been waiting for hours."

"We had to walk two miles to get here," said Ed. "What you fellers got to eat?"

"We've got two boxes of sardines, sandwiches and cookies," replied Tom, looking into the sack formerly used for school-books, in which we now carried our grub, and casually removing one of the aforesaid cookies.

"What are you eating now for?" I expostulated, "we won't have anything left when we get to the mountains. You've got to divvy on that."

This Tom did reluctantly, after taking out an enormous bite.

"What you got in your sack, Ed?" inquired Jim, pursuing the interesting question of provisions.

"Oh, nothing but some apple pie and hard eggs."

"I tell you what, we'll get some grouse and bear meat when we get up to the mountains," said Will Speer, who had recently come to Colorado Springs from New York, and whom we had at first despised as a tenderfoot and a dude because he wore a derby hat after the style the boys derisively dubbed as "cheese cutters." But one rainy day we had a boxing tournament on the barn floor with gloves as hard

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as bricks, and Will Speer showed us a few upper cuts that increased our respect for him.

"More than likely the bear meat will get us," said Jim contemptuously.

"Bert Hughes saw a brown bear last week when I was hunting for rabbit in the scrub oak along the foot of Cheyenne," I remarked.

"I tell you what I'd do if I saw a bear," put in Tom.

We all waited expectantly at this crisis.

"I'd climb a tree."

"He'd climb after you," I said.

"No, he wouldn't; I just read in a book bears don't climb trees."

"I tell you, boys, what I'd do," said Ed. "I'd just wait until the old bear got within twenty feet of me and then I'd shoot him in the eyes," and he leveled his shot-gun at a stump in front of us to show the dramatic possibilities of the situation.

"If I saw a bear I'd run," remarked Jim, "and if he ketch'd up to me, I'd stick this bowie knife into his heart just as he was going to hug me."

"Annie Moore wouldn't let any bear hug you, Jim," said Will Speer tantalizingly.

"Oh, come off," said the conscious Jim, "she don't think nothing of me."

"She's dead struck on you," said Ed, joining in, "I saw her put an apple on your desk in school."

Jim gasped at this incident of outspoken affection.

"You're a liar," he said.

"You're another and you dasen't back it!!"

But we interfered, because a fight at the start would spoil the day's fun.

We had now come to the first of a series of swimming holes that lay imbedded in a meadow. To swim now or when we came back, that was the question; and we decided to put it off until we returned. So we went on, taking short cuts through the fields, until we reached where the ground began to rise towards the foot of Cheyenne Mountain.

This mountain attains a height of five thousand feet above the plain and stretches to the south for twelve miles, and is distinguished by three summits of uniform elevation. Behind it rose the Rocky Mountains, range after range, like the recurring billows of the ocean, while Pike's Peak, some miles to the northeast, looked over the intervening mountains, the undisputed king of the whole range, that extended for many miles to the north and to the south. It seemed fine to get under the cool black pines, and, hot and thirsty as we were, to lie flat down and drink out of the clear mountain stream bubbling over the granite rocks. Little waves would well up into our eyes and we would get up gasping but refreshed.

We trudged along the Cripple Creek road which goes up the northeast slope of the mountain for some thousand feet and then sweeps around to the west side. Every once in a while a little chipmunk would run across the road and sit on a rock, apparently waiting for us, and, as we fired a volley of stones, it would whisk off into the undergrowth, entirely unscathed.

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"Hello, there's a deserted mine over there," said Tom, pointing to a side cañon at the head of which stood the "Giant's chair" in red sandstone. Of course we went over to investigate, and discovered below the dump a log cabin with its earth roof caved in and a lot of rusty powder cans lying about. Climbing up the dump, we saw a sagging door which once had closed the entrance to the mine. We looked cautiously in.

"Let's go inside, boys," said Jim, taking out his trusty bowie knife.

Tom and Ed said they preferred to stay out in the glad sunshine where they could see the blue-birds and listen to the "cheep" of the chipmunks. We little suspected the duplicity that lurked in their hearts. Now the party of intrepid explorers, headed by Jim with his bowie knife, and I, a close second, with a shot-gun, went into the dark and damp interior. But we had taken due care to push the door as wide open as it would go, light and fresh air being always desirable.

How cool and damp it was, as we went on, walking on a line of boards laid along the bottom of the tunnel. Sometimes we would step off into an unseen pool of water. It became darker and darker, not as it is at night, but it appeared thick and almost palpable, and it was difficult to breathe, at least it seemed so; while far back we could see a star of light that marked the entrance. Then we turned a corner and even that was hid from our sight.

"Say, Jim, maybe there's a bear or a mountain lion hid in this tunnel," said Will.

"Oh, I guess not," replied Jim, but we went forward more carefully.

"Maybe they have sunk a shaft in this tunnel and we'll step off and go down a thousand feet," I said, determined not to overlook any danger that might lurk in our path.

Then we proceeded at a snail's pace through the enveloping darkness that seemed to press close upon us, putting one apprehensive foot before the other.

"What's that?" said Jim.

We stopped and listened intently, and there was no sound except the drip drip of the water from the rock roof just above our heads. Then we heard a low growl, but it seemed to come from behind us. Oh, if we were only out where there was some light, we wouldn't care, but to be sprung upon there in the dark, without any light, was awful!

"Look there, Bill, right in front of us," said Jim, in a scared whisper, backing against me; and there in the blackness were two yellow eyes, glaring and baleful.

A fierce excitement came over us. Click, click went the hammers of the gun as I pulled them nervously back, and those eyes were getting nearer and nearer to us, a muffled roar, and then we skedaddled back through the gloom, stumbling over each other, striking against the wall, so that it was a wonder we did not dash our brains out against the rocks. And there was that beast coming behind us, nearer and nearer, just about

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to tear down our backs with his claws! Oh, where was that light at the end of the tunnel, we surely could not have got into a side branch! Then we reached the boards and saw before us a chink of light. That door was shut fast and we rushed against it but it didn't give. The animal must be coming around the turn in the tunnel now!

Jim picked up a big rock and hurled it frantically against the door and broke it from its rusty hinges, and we stumbled out into the light and rushed down the dump, leaving Tom and Ed, who were calmly sitting on a rock throwing at a chipmunk, to be devoured by the furious beast, who was already glaring through the entrance of the mine. For hadn't those rascals shut us in that awful mine? We didn't look back until we reached the main road, but the mountain lion or bear had gone back into his den. Perhaps he was a bit lazy; it was rather warm outside, and it would certainly have required a great effort on his part to have caught up with such swift-footed travelers as we were. Possibly some skeptical individual might suggest that this ferocious animal only existed in our excited imaginations, but don't you believe that for a moment.

Now the road became steep and we began to climb in earnest. Will Speer, the tenderfoot, was for going straight up the mountain, but Jim, who was the mountaineer of the party, put his veto on that proposition.

"You can't tackle old Cheyenne that way," he said, "you don't know nothing about climbing these mountains."

"I climbed all over the Catskills," replied Will defiantly.

"Umph, Catskills!" replied Jim contemptuously. "These Rockies are sure enough mountains."

"Why, Pike's Peak is bigger than all your mountains put together," chimed in Ed and we loyally joined in the chorus.

The tenderfoot was in a decided minority, but he bragged enough for ten. We had our revenge later on when we really began to go up, and Will was obliged to rest every fifty feet and gasp for breath and declare skeptically that he didn't believe this mountain had any top. We would cheer him up by telling him that it was just where he saw that big rock, and when we reached that, that the top was surely where that tall pine tree stood, and so on *ad infinitum*. However, this is anticipating.

We were now following the road where it turned the corner of the mountain and was cut into the west side, and below us were ravines filled with pine trees, and we could look down almost into the deep red gash of Cheyenne Cañon, and beyond, the rugged slopes rose toward the sharp shoulders of Mt. Rosa. The road now ran on a level for several miles and we walked with a swinging stride that took us along rapidly. The wagon road now bent clear around into the curve of the mountain, and we could see it just across on the opposite side of a deep ravine. It seemed as if it was close enough to reach by a suspension bridge, but it took us a full half-hour to arrive at that side.

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Right in the turn of the curve we found a cool spring of clear water, overshadowed by chokecherry bushes. Here we stopped to take our last drink and to rest before attacking the ridge that ran up to the crest of the mountain. We could look across the cañons and chasms to the mighty mountains, Rosa, Old Baldy, The Peak, with their summits reared against the distant blue and their mantles of snow shining in the radiant air, giants, every one of them. Boys, of course, do not have a conventional appreciation of scenery; nevertheless it appeals to them with a simple and natural force, and we could no more help feeling the presence of those surrounding mountains than we could resist a sensation of awe if we were in the same room with President McKinley, Admiral Dewey, and—shall I add it?—Bob Fitzsimmons.

Getting on our feet again, we gave our belts a cinch and, leaving the road, struck up the ridge, one of several which buttress the west side of Cheyenne. My! how blue the sky was, and we seemed so much nearer to the white and blazing sun, and the air, with the scent of the pines permeating it, was clearer than your lowland people can imagine, but there was not a quiver of heat in it.

Will Speer began to feel the altitude, and every hundred feet he would throw himself down in the shade of a clump of pines and gasp for breath.

"This 'ere is like the Catskills aint it?" inquired Jim kindly.

"They have got lots more trees than your old mountains," he replied undauntedly.

"There's going to be lots of snow next winter," said Jim.

"How do you know?" I asked.

"You can tell by the kinnikinnick having so many berries on it. That's a sure sign, my father says."

This kinnikinnick is a traditional Indian tobacco and lies in glossy spots of green on the mountain side, touched with the color of the red berries, something like the mistletoe. It is very slippery under foot and if you tread on it you are apt to go back a step, which is an unfortunate catastrophe when you are climbing a mountain, when every forward step has a considerable value. There were red, purple and white flowers growing on the gravel shoulders of the ridge. We put them around our hat bands with fine decorative effect. But Jim got a bouquet together.

"What you going to do with them flowers?" inquired Ed.

"I'm getting them for my little sister, she likes them."

How nice it was of Jim to think of his sister on that far away mountain slope! His affection for her was a doubtful quantity at home, I believe.

"You ain't getting them for no sister," jeered Ed, "you're picking them for your girl."

This remark seemed only to increase the bad blood between Ed and Jim, and it led to a settlement in the alley back of Ed's barn subsequently; but with that

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I have nothing to do. It is all I can manage to get up Cheyenne Mountain with you.

"How are you going to get through these rocks?"

I said, changing the current of conversation for the sake of peace.

A jumble of huge bowlders was placed squarely before us on the ridge like a big lump on the backbone of a horse.

"Let's go right through," said Jim.

"No, I'm going round," said Tom; and a hot debate ensued as to the merits of the different ways.

Jim held firmly to the idea of going direct through and I was with him, while Tom and the other two were for skirting the base, which Jim thought would take them down the mountain a ways and then they would have to climb up the ridge again.

As soon as Tom and his followers had departed into the brush, Jim and I started on the run, for although nothing had been said each side had a fierce determination to win and prove that their choice of routes was the quickest. Jim and I tore through the thick undergrowth, getting pretty well scratched, and the passage between the rocks become more and more narrow. We climbed up where a little stream had once come down, clinging to the small bushes growing on the sides of the bowlders; fortunately they were tough or we would have got a smart fall. We came to a place which would have been impassable except that a naked pine had fallen over and bridged the gap, and we walked along its trunk, holding on to the dead branches for handles.

18 At the Foot of the Rockies.

Now we came to the smooth rock floor of a former waterfall that completely barred our way. On either side of it were walls of rock some forty feet in height. The incline of the fall was steep and the water had planed it to a smooth surface in which glittered fragments of mica amid the gray granite. Here was a dilemma, and no time was to be lost! Those fellows must be half-way around already and how they would crow if they beat us. We must go on. Jim started on his hands and knees up the smooth incline, gripping the ends of his fingers into every crevice. He got up for a distance of twelve feet, then slid back, scraping his knees badly. Before starting again, he took off his shoes, tied the strings together and then with the strings across the back of his neck and the shoes dangling in front of him, he started up again. His bare feet helped him a great deal, and this time he made it, and, reaching the top, yelled for me to come on.

I got half-way up the incline when I began to slip, and caught hold of a small bush; but it began to give, and I tell you it looked a mighty long ways down the rock, much further than when looking up to that point from below. But Jim was equal to the emergency, and, cutting off a long piece of trailing vine, he threw one end to me. It was as tough as manilla rope, and I scrambled up the rock. No time was to be wasted, and without stopping to put on our shoes, we dashed ahead. The way was comparatively clear. We squeezed through a narrow slit where a mighty boulder had been split in twain, and there we were

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on the clear ridge again, and our rivals were not in sight. In a short time we heard a great floundering in the bushes below us and Tom appeared.

"Shucks, those fellers are here," he said in grieved tones.

"We've been waiting for you fellers a long time," yelled Jim, hardly able as yet to get his breath. "Where's Will?"

"Oh, he's coming," replied Ed; "we had to wait for him or we'd 'a' beat you."

"Yes, it looks like you were waiting for him," I said.

Just then we heard a shot below us.

"Oh, he's shot himself," exclaimed Jim.

We stood terrified for a second, then rushed down into the brush. We found Will sitting on a log and deathly pale.

"You ain't killed?" I asked in scared tones.

"Worse than that," he said, "that bottle of Manitou ginger champagne kerbusted."

Sure enough! There were the fragments of glass scattered around; the jostling and heat had made the bottle explode. This was a tragedy, sure enough. We had been getting thirstier all the time and were looking forward to the moment when in the cool shade of some rock, we would have a pull at that bottle. As it was, we would have to eat our grub without water, for you are not apt to find bubbling springs on the top of the mountain in the fall.

Far below us in the pine-filled ravine, we knew there was a trickling stream in the cool depths, but

this only added to our aggravation. However, there was no use crying over it, but we managed to do considerable grumbling; and the worst of it was, there was no one we could rightly blame. Jim was the only cheerful member of the party, and he seemed to take a perverse delight in conjuring up pictures of soda-water fountains, and he went over the list of flavors, inquiring which we would have and if we didn't want ice cream and ice sherbet.

"Oh, shut up," said Ed, crossly, "let's sit on this rock and eat."

But Jim was obdurate; he knew of a fine place for lunch. So we trudged on, Ed and Will growing more and more skeptical about finding the lunching place. Around us and on the south side of the ridge lay a wilderness of granite boulders of all sizes, from a dinner table to the dome of Saint Peter's. There were crevices, caves and little cañons between them, a veritable boys' paradise for adventure. Away up near the crest of Cheyenne was a slab of narrow rock, elevated like a huge cannon pointing across the intervening cañons towards the slope of Mt. Rosa, the rival of Cheyenne. It looked capable of throwing a much larger shell than that cast by a thirteen-inch gun.

"There's the place," said Jim, pointing to a huge rectangular rock above us, which rested on two boulders about thirty feet apart. I wish I could give you an idea of how immense that slab of rock was. It would have made a fine table for the great giants of the North, who were accustomed to use the tallest

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piners for walking sticks. It was at least fifteen feet through and its flat top was big enough for a running track like you have in the Gym. We walked under it without stooping and it was like stepping into a cool dry cellar from the outside heat. The granite felt cool as we placed our hands against it, and the floor of this room was laid in gravel.

"This is a great place," said Will. "I never seen anything to beat it in the Catskills."

We felt that honorable amends had been made to our mountains and that Will would in time cease to be a tenderfoot and become one of us.

"Oh, let's eat," said Ed.

To this there was no opposition.

"I wish we had that bottle of ginger champagne and we could have buried it in the gravel and it would have made it as cool as ice," I said.

"Dry up," said Tom, "what's the use of talking that way now?"

Ed was busy cutting open the sardine can with his knife and Jim had wandered off. He came back hurriedly.

"Come here, fellers, I want to show you something."

"What is it, bear tracks?" I inquired.

"Come along and you'll find out."

"We followed him as he climbed up on a large rock.

"Where is it?" we asked.

"Fine view, ain't it?" said Jim, with a sweeping gesture towards the far-off ranges. We felt inclined

to pitch him off, being in no mood to appreciate scenery.

"Hello, here's some water," yelled Tom, and there on top of that rock in quite a large hollow was a shallow sheet of rain water.

We threw ourselves down around the edge, with our several noses making dents in the water, and drank greedily, absorbing considerable debris that lay at the bottom; and when we were through the supply of that reservoir had fallen considerably, to a greater extent indeed than did the ocean when the giant Thor took a long pull at the goblet of the sea.

"That's good," said Will, wiping his mouth with his coat sleeve. As a matter of fact it was lukewarm, but well, we were thirsty. On the top of another rock we saw several little silver mirrors of water in various pockets, and our spirits rose and we were in a very cheerful mood.

We went back to inform Ed and discovered him in the act of swallowing a sardine. We told our news, but he was not going to be lured away from the lunch counter just then. We seated ourselves in a circle on the gravel and poured the grub out on a paper in the center. We ate our sandwiches, hard-boiled eggs with pepper and salt, and the pie and cheese, with the sauce of a fairly good appetite; and it was a caution the way Ed made those sardines disappear. He paid for this later on.

After we had cleaned everything, even to the scattered crumbs, we felt very comfortable on our insides and all quarrelsomeness had vanished. We now ad-

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journed to the top of our house and stretche! ourselves on the warm surface of the rock, with our hats pulled down over our eyes, comfortable as so many basking kittens. As far as we could see there were mountains and mountains! Away off beyond the shoulder of Pike's Peak, over one of the parks, a black thunder-storm was grumbling to itself and thrusting out every now and then a tongue of flame; but it was a mere speck in the vastness of the view.

We didn't dawdle around long. Will, excited by the rarefied air, declaimed "The boy stood on the burning deck," with variations; and then he grew patriotic in this verse :—

" And Freedom, from her mountain height,
Unfurled her banner to the air ;
She tore the azure robe of night
And set the stars in glory there."

This sentiment met with approval. After this part of the exercises was over, we put up a bottle on a neighboring rock and shot at it with Will's 22 rifle. Tom was the only one who hit it.

" Well, boys, we'd better be moving," said Jim, letting his belt out a couple of holes, " we ain't to the top yet and we're going up to Eagle Rock."

At the idea of further climbing, Ed rolled around on the rock and groaned.

" My belly aches like the mischief," he groaned again.

" You ate too many of those sardines, walking will be good for you," replied Jim, sternly.

24 At the Foot of the Rockies.

Before we left our castle of the rock we wrote our distinguished names on a slip of paper and put a stone on it to keep it from blowing away; I also added the name of "James G. Blaine, President of the United States." This statement represented a boyish dream that was never realized.

Then we started off, with Ed bringing up the rear, bending almost double and groaning dismally. But he didn't receive the sympathy his sufferings deserved. It was now easy-going, as we were on the crest of the mountain, and far below us stretched the great plains. The town looked like a checker-board. The north horizon was bounded by the divide, covered with an innumerable army of pines, making it look as dark as if overflowed by a flood of black lava. To the south ran the green line of the Fountain Creek, and we followed it with our eyes until it dwindled away in the far off haze; and here and there on the plain were the spots of the cloud shadows.

"I can see Denver, boys," said Tom.

"No, you can't," said Will, "it's seventy-five miles off."

"Anyway, you can see the smoke."

This was true, and forty-five miles to the south rose the smoke from the Pueblo Smelters. We tried to pick out our ranch house, but it was very difficult; however, we succeeded in locating the barn. Ed was the only one who took no interest in the view; he lay in the sun, glad to have a little respite from walking.

Our way now lay through some close clumps of the beautiful quaking ash. They are in size like a sap-

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ling, with their green-white leaves quivering in the breeze like myriads of silver bells; and under foot there was a soft, deep carpet of red and yellow leaves.

"Hello, what's this?" said Tom, pointing to a larger tree than the rest, whose smooth pale bark was torn in parallel lines.

"Some bears done that, and them streaks are fresh too," said Jim.

Somehow, after that we seemed to be more isolated, and the mountains became lonely and unfriendly and every thick grove was a lurking place, and every tangled thicket between the rocks concealed a den. Ed, who had been dawdling along behind, now took a renewed interest in life and kept up with the procession. We began to find it hard work climbing; for what looked like a mere bunch on the ridge of Cheyenne viewed from the plain now developed into a mountain of itself. But there was that great pinnacle of the Eagle Rock rising higher and higher towards the sky, and we determined to reach it; which we finally did, and it was just one o'clock by our Waterbury watches, and alas! we were all hungry, except Ed.

As you look up from the plain, this rock is the most conspicuous object along the whole front of the mountain; but of its tremendous size we had no idea until it stood before us, with its gray and grim shaft rising towards the sky, and its top might have been a good point for the eagle to have started in his flight upward to wing his way beyond the veil of blue. It

stood apart from the crest of the mountain, and a thousand feet below it was set in Cheyenne's breast, while around its base it seemed as if a hundred ruined castles of the olden time had been heaped. So tremendous was it that it seemed like a pillar around which the mountain had been piled. In the cleft of one of the shorter pinnacles was an eagle's nest, made of pieces of stick; but no boy, however he might like bird-nesting, would have cared to go up there if it had been accessible, which it was not.

Our American eagle is a very unpleasant bird to tackle, whether on sea or land. We could see one of them a thousand feet below us and still several thousand feet above the plain, on dark outstretched wings, without a flutter or the least beating of his pinions, he sailed and swayed majestically upon the air.

We decided not to go back the way we had come, but to descend the east front of the mountain. This was rather risky as far as getting home before dark was concerned; for that side was marked by many precipices. But away we glided, or rather slid, on our backs, much to the wear and tear of our clothes; and it seemed as if we would have to return to civilization under the cover of darkness. Will Speer was the only one who refused to try this primitive method of the descent of man. He insisted on going down very carefully, step by step.

Just then I heard a yell of terror behind me and looked around just in time. He had started a big rock down, and it was coming upon me with a trail of dust behind it. One might just as well be struck

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by a cannon ball, as far as effect went, the glory would be less. I rolled to one side and it just grazed me; but there were Tom and Ed directly in its path, and they were sliding down with such impetus they could not stop. It was following after them with the speed of an express train and was almost upon them. I shut my eyes, not a brave thing to do, but this is an accurate narrative, and I opened them again, expecting to see scattered remnants of Tom and Ed; and there was that rock swirling through the air beyond them. Luckily it had struck a fallen log and bounced clear over them and went crashing into the woods below. That was a close call!

"You fellers almost went over the range that time," I said, to hide my concern.

Will Speer felt so badly that we had to cheer him or he might have wept; but after that we kept him at the head of the procession so that it might not become a funeral one.

All this time we were keeping along the side of the big rock, and we discovered a broken place in its masonry, and managed to get to the front of it where there was a narrow shelf. Below us was a sheer precipice for many hundreds of feet, and at the base of it was a broad stream of broken rocks and stones of varying sizes. We now began to indulge in the game of rolling rocks down the mountain. It sounds as simple as rolling off a log, but it is not so safe. Nor is it every place in the mountain you can indulge in this healthful sport; because you are apt to roll a stone down in some cañon and strike a stray tourist which

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is contrary to the game laws in Colorado, though it is not punished so severely as killing a mountain sheep, which is the rarer animal.

Now here goes for the first rock! Jim rolled it to the edge and away it went, hurtling through the air, becoming smaller and smaller, and finally struck, breaking into a hundred fragments. Hurrah! that was fine! But here goes a bigger one. It took a leap out into the empty air, and you couldn't help having a shrinking feeling of sympathy with it; and then it struck on to the stream of rocks, starting a small avalanche. Each one of us now picked out a rock, and, standing as near the edge as we dared, prepared to hurl it over, to see which one would win. One, two, go! And Jim almost went over in his eagerness to give his rock head start, but we saved him by his coat tails. The stones went whirling one after the other through five hundred feet of space. Mine struck first, but Jim's beyond mine, and away they went, taking great leaps and bounds. Finally mine broke in two and Jim's took a flying jump into the timber, ten good yards in the lead. Tom's had broken into fragments, but he was backing the larger piece, which was still traveling; the others were distanced. Jim generally won, and he explained afterwards that was because he selected round rocks, which did not break so easily.

The dust of battle, with a strong smell of brimstone, came up to us from where the stones had volleyed and thundered down the declivity. As a grand finale we tackled a huge boulder that lay back on

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the shelf. This was our *pièce de résistance*. There was no doubt about that when we attempted to move it. Its inertia resisted our strongest efforts. We all got a hold of it and pulled and tugged, and it would give a little and then settle back into its hollow. Finally Jim brought a small pine.

"Now you fellers pull together," he shouted.

Then he slipped it under a little ways; another united yank and it went still further. Then we got hold of the pole and helped Jim. Slowly and surely the monster rolled out of the place where it had laid embedded for years. Ponderously over and over it went and hesitated for a second at the brink before it took its awful plunge. Then down it dropped, and striking a projecting ledge some hundred feet below, it launched out into space. Down, down it whirled with terrific force, striking the stream of bowlders below and stirring the whole crowd of them to action; and they went tumbling after to see what the big stranger meant by coming down on them in such an unceremonious manner. Like a pack of hounds, they went after him; but he didn't wait, not much! With gathered velocity on he went, until with a great bound of over a hundred feet, he struck the top of a tall pine, then,—crash, crash, like a huge projectile, he tore through the close ranks of the dark army of the pines! Further down we could see the trees quivering under the force of the impact, even when the sound did not come to our ears. It was immense!

But in our excitement we had lost all track of time.

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"Boys, it's four o'clock," said Will, looking at his watch.

"If we get home before dark, we'll have to get a hustle," said Jim.

We didn't want to spend a night on the mountains and have our distracted parents looking for us with lanterns. So we started down on the double quick, tearing our clothes on the dead pines which lay on the slope thicker than dead flies on sticky paper. After a while we struck a long slide covered to quite a depth with sand and disintegrated gravel rock. It may be fun sliding down-hill on a sled, or tobogganing on ice, but, as for me, give me a sand slide at a precipitous angle!

"I'll beat you down," yelled Jim, as he gave a running jump. And away he went twenty feet at a step. It beats seven-leagued boots, and, what's more, it's correct; and the gravel dashed away from his feet like flying spray. After him we went! Half-way down I struck a concealed rock over which the gravel had flowed, and went sprawling; and Tom, who was at my heels, followed suit. Jim had a big lead and won out. In five minutes we had covered ground that would have consumed a full hour at our ordinary gait.

Then we pushed on through ravines and tangled water-courses until we reached the plateau at the mountain's base. How numb our legs felt as we started along the level. The sun was now behind a range, and the cool shadows of the great mountains were stretching further and further out onto the

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plains. It was quite dark by the time we reached home, and Ben rushed out barking furiously at the party of small and dirt-stained tramps that came trudging along the road. But we could say quite honestly to our friend Cheyenne that he had given us a very pleasant day, and besides by this time it was so late that the chores were all done, and that is a consideration worth mentioning.

WHEN WE WENT HUNTING.

"Good morning for ducks," remarked Tom, as we stood looking out of the steaming window at the small remnant of landscape that still remained uncovered by fog. Now foggy mornings are extremely rare in Colorado, so we valued this one highly, not so much on account of its appearance as because it would aid us in hunting the ducks.

"Hello, here they come," I said. Then out of the west in regular order we saw a flock of them flying rather high, and to our disappointment they passed over the big pond, and down the creek they flew and were soon lost in the fog; but in a minute back they came on a much lower plane. After a short turn to the north, they fluttered above the pond and then dropped into it. There must have been at least twenty of them. Tom got his single-barreled shot-gun and buckled his cartridge belt on, the one that he had made of denim cloth expressly for shot-gun ammunition. I armed myself with a double-barreled gun, and off we started. The collie as usual wanted to follow us, but he had to content himself with a reserved seat on a top step above the spring house, and there he sat with his tail beating the ground impatiently and looking intently in the direction of the

pond; and when the first gun was fired, he would dash down to the pond.

We made a wide circle through the damp meadow, stooping low so as to avoid any possibility of detection by the ducks, who were very scary, having run a gauntlet of shot-guns from I don't know how far north. On one side of the pond there was a growth of willow bushes which would serve us for a screen. Crossing the ditch very carefully, we crawled through the wet grass until we reached the protection of the willows, heavy with the moisture, which ran in translucent drops down their yellow bark. We raised our heads very cautiously, hardly daring to breathe, and there we saw a whole fleet of blue teal floating around in apparent unconcern, but it seemed to us as if each eye were fixed on us, and we drew down again quick. Talk about the thrill when a new planet swims into your ken, or any such incident,—why, the sensation sinks into nothingness compared to the first sight of the ducks you have crawled half a mile to get within range of! Of course we were nothing but inglorious pot-hunters and entirely unsportsmanlike, but we were happy in our blissful ignorance. We took another look and saw that they were not yet well bunched, being scattered all over the pond; and we noticed a big gray mallard who kept exclusively to himself.

Tom whispered to me: "I am going to crawl around to the west side and don't you shoot until I do."

Then he slid carefully backward till he was down the bank and then went along, crouching very low. I took another look and my heart jumped, for they

were coming closer together into the southwestern corner of the pond, and now and then one would take a plunge bath and then stand up on his coat tails and flap his wings. The mallard was still by himself in the center of the pond. He evidently considered it beneath his dignity to associate with those ridiculously little teal, and indeed he couldn't have been prouder if he had been a canvas back. I considered that the time for action had come, and if Tom wasn't ready, that was his own fault. I pulled back both hammers, carefully, so they wouldn't click. The teal were now bunched together as if they wanted to keep warm, and were entirely unsuspicious of the concealed battery that was about to open on them. Resting my elbow on my knee, I brought the gun to my shoulder and looking down the groove between the barrels, I brought the little brass sight at the end to bear directly on the middle of the huddled group.

Out jumped the flame and smoke, and crash,—I went backwards down the bank, having in my excitement pulled both triggers at once; and my shoulder was lame for a week. I could see Tom with his gun following the flight of the mallard. Bang! and the mallard flew calmly on down the creek. I suppose he regarded Tom's effort as a salute in his honor. I got up the bank as quickly as possible, expecting to see the pond covered with dead ducks, and behold, there were three little beggars in the corner with their heads in the water.

"Why didn't you wait for me, you blamed idiot?" inquired Tom, kindly.

Having no excuse to offer, I said: "Let dogs delight to bark and bite," quoting an infant aphorism of the time.

"Umph," said Tom, walking off in utter disgust.

We then started off down the creek for more ducks. With extreme care, we went around a bend expecting to see the creek alive with them, and there was nothing but the muddy, swirling water; but our expectations were just as high when we approached the next bend. At one place we were taking a short-cut where the creek swept in a great curve, and Tom was walking ahead in a narrow path through the underbrush, when he stopped suddenly and beckoned for me to come up; and I saw a blue crane standing in the shallow water at the edge of the creek. Here was a *rara avis* sure enough, and his plumes would make fine Indian feathers. We both drew a bead on him and fired, and then he fell flopping in the water with both legs broken.

Down the creek, through the mist, we could hear the banging of shot-guns, and we knew that every duck in the country must be either dead or have taken flight for the south. So we went back through the pasture, Tom carrying the crane, while I proudly bore my three ducks.

But the duck season was all too short and we had to spend our Saturdays hunting cottontails along the edge of the woods or on the upland south of the creek. One day, I remember in particular, we all had lively recollections of it, and with good cause. We started after rabbits but ran into much larger game, as will appear.

On the morning in question we were watching the road anxiously for a couple of the boys from town. Jim was already on hand. Soon we saw them coming in the distance, and we recognized them by the light gleaming on the gun barrels. We met on the bridge, then struck across the fields toward Mt. Washington. Tom wanted us to form in line, military fashion, and charge up the slope of the hill where there were piles of dirt where the city's trash was thrown; that, he said, represented the camp of the enemy. But we didn't have the requisite enthusiasm and imagination, and turned his suggestion down.

Our course lay through the cemetery with its white drift of tombstones and the ravines filled with solemn pines, a place of decided ill-omen for boys armed with shot-guns. We never thought of it in that light, however. We found the guardian of the cemetery, not, however, with a skull in his hand, but he had a large sandwich which he was eating composedly as he sat on the edge of a coffin box by a newly-dug grave. He told us a number of stories which contained very unpleasant details and I shall not relate them here.

Beyond the cemetery we came to the brown hills covered with sparse buffalo grass, and these hills formed one side of the valley of the Fountain que Bainille. The first game we saw were the little prairie dogs whisking about from one hole to another of their small settlement of dugouts. They were evidently saying to themselves: "Here come those

foolish little boys from town with shot-guns. Now we'll have some fun with them."

You may think it is easy to shoot those little beggars, but it isn't. There went one fat, yellow fellow, scampering for the next hole; then he sat up steady as a stake driven into the ground. As Tom drew a bead on him, he dropped into the opening of his underground house; wagging his tail, alert in every fiber, and as Tom pulled the trigger, he disappeared down the hole, and all the consolation Tom had was that his shot tore up the ground where the prairie dog had just been.

In a few minutes the little rascals were out again, running from one hole to another. There went one fellow from first to second base, another from third to home; but one of them was too "sassy" and he got hurt. He stayed just a trifle too long as Jim fired, and though he fell down into his underground home, there were marks of blood on the dirt.

Just then Jim gave a jump into the air, and yelled: "Look out, there's a rattler."

He had almost stepped over a snake, as it lay torpid in the hot sun, looking very much like a harmless stick. But let him strike you with those white fangs, in which there is a cup of brownish poison distilled from his bitter body, and in five minutes you swell up and become black and die. It is extremely unpleasant. Lucky for Jim this fellow was loggy when he stepped over him.

But he soon became aroused and alert enough, with his demon's eyes drawn to a pin point of shining black

and his head drawn back above his coil, and feinting like the flash of a pugilist's arm. He was an ugly brute with his vicious fangs showing and his rattles at the end of his tail whirring ominously. He was waiting for us to come within range and then—but we kept a respectful distance from his snakeship, and with one volley sent him to kingdom come. There wasn't much left of him except his rattles. We counted the buttons and there were just thirteen, a mighty unlucky number for somebody. There were six on a side and a small button on the end, so we reckoned that the lamented deceased was six and one-half years old, at least that was the way we figured it.

We had gone on for about a quarter of a mile when a big jack-rabbit jumped up from a soapweed in front of us, and away he bounded down the slope with the elasticity of a rubber ball. To our surprised eyes he looked about three feet high and he must have gone twenty feet at a hop-skip-and-jump. It seemed as if he had compressed springs in his hind legs. We pulled up as quick as we could and fired, and Mr. Jack took three summersaults and was giving his last kick just as we came up.

"Who killed Cock Robin?" was the question.

"I did," said Tom, "with my single-barreled shotgun."

"No, I did," said Jim, "with my double-barreled gun, I killed him."

But it was unanimously decided that it was not I that had done the execution, being a notoriously bad shot.

"You couldn't hit a wooden duck," said Tom, when I claimed the deceased rabbit. This remark referred to a painful incident in my career when I carefully crawled within ten feet of a decoy and then missed him. We finally decided the matter by the boy's usual method of arbitration, namely, copper pennies.

"You match me," said Tom to Jim. Both had the pennies covered in their hands.

"Lift up your hand, Jim."

"No, you."

It was heads and Jim won; and so it went the round. Will and I were finally the only ones left. "I match you," I said, and as luck would have it, I did. By the irony of fate, the poorest shot got the rabbit. I picked him up carefully by the hind legs and on the procession moved.

After a while Jim remarked, "Umph! I wouldn't carry that rabbit unless I wanted to get lice over me. It's just alive with them."

I thought I could feel some of them crawling up my arm and I threw the rabbit down.

"I don't want the old rabbit; it ain't fit to eat, anyhow."

Jim picked it up, remarking, "If you fellers don't want him, I guess I'll carry him." He was awarded the prize and slung it carelessly over his shoulder. There never was anything finicky about Jim.

We had now got as far south as Sand Creek, a historical stream of sand on whose banks a massacre of Indians had once taken place, a remarkable occurrence, indeed, for it was the whites who were gener-

ally the objects of destruction. We were tired and hot and also hungry. The unclouded sun had been pouring down its dry, white blaze and the far off horizon of the plains was circled with a heated haze. The big red rocks stood out clear on the mountain range six miles to the west. Jim cast a blinking but calculating eye at the sun.

"Must be twelve o'clock," he said, after taking as careful observations as if he were the first officer on the deck of a liner. As a matter of fact it was nearly eleven, but Jim was governed by his subjective stomach as well as objective eye.

We found a stunted cottonwood tree which cast a limited shade in the bed of Sand Creek, and threw ourselves down and drank the lukewarm coffee from a bottle, and the milk which had been mingled with the coffee was churned into small particles of butter. We lolled around for a while in the sand and amused ourselves by writing our names and drawing pictures of each other, which were neither accurate nor flattering, and if they could have been petrified in the sand, the future archeologist would have discovered that this region was inhabited by a race much inferior to our own, whose ideas of art were crude and simple in the extreme. Finally we left the wind to obliterate our sketches and started off much refreshed.

Tom, who was the most eager hunter in the crowd, went off some distance to the right where he could look over a low line of adobe hills. Pretty soon he came running back, much excited.

"Say, boys, there's a whole herd of antelopes over there," he exclaimed breathlessly.

"You are trying to fool us," I said.

"No, I ain't, come on."

Very cautiously we approached the top of the ridge and, taking off our hats, peaked over; and sure enough, about a quarter of a mile away, at the head of a draw, were four antelope quietly feeding. Whew! here was luck! If we could only shoot one of them, just think of our carrying it home in triumph to our astonished people, who were always making sarcastic remarks about the solitary rabbit we brought home as a result of our day's hunting; and then the boys at school,—wouldn't they envy us!

We drew back down the hill a ways to discuss the vital question as to how we were to get in range of the game; for the antelope is keen of eye and ear and scent, and at the first hint he is off, there is a flash of white, and before you pull up your rifle, he is in the next county. Tom, who believed in being prepared for any emergency in the shape of bear or larger game, had four cartridges loaded with buckshot. It was necessary for some one to go unprovided with ammunition, and the boys decided that I was the one. I kicked strenuously, but it was no use.

"I tell you, Bill, you can fire both barrels at once, you've got bird-shot," said Jim consolingly; but as my shoulder was still lame from an experience of that kind, I didn't welcome his suggestion with enthusiasm.

How were we to get close enough? With rifles we

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could have fired from the top of the ridge, but with our shot-guns we must get within at least seventy-five yards. Luckily for us, the wind was blowing from the west and the antelope were to the north of us.

"I tell you what, boys," said Will Speer, who was recently from the East, "I know a good scheme, I read about it in 'Wild Life on the Plains.' Take a red handkerchief and put it on a stick and wave it over the top of the hill, and those antelope are so curious they will walk right up to it."

"Then you put salt on their tails," remarked Jim, contemptuously.

This plan of Will's didn't seem to meet with approval. Jim had the only red handkerchief in the crowd and that was due to nose-bleed, and we didn't have any antelopes to waste on experiments. As fortune would have it, there was a gulley running down the draw where the antelope were and it continued outside a wire fence and went under a railroad bridge. Tom, with the eye of a Von Moltke, saw its advantage to us; so under the protection of the ridge we crossed the railroad and entered the mouth of the gulley.

We crouched low as we went along, though we might have walked upright, but a load of apprehension seemed to rest on our heads and shoulders which kept us bowed. The gulley deepened to a ravine, with gray sides of adobe, carved by the water. Along the bottom was sand brought down by the last water spout, and we walked along on tiptoe, without the least sound. My, how hot it was! But we

didn't feel that much, because a shiver of the buck fever would come over us every once in a while, and our excitement increased as we neared the head of the ravine. At the end of it we climbed up cautiously and found a semicircular cave where the water had taken its first jump down into the ravine, and around its edge queer tall, dry prairie grass, making a fine screen. Looking through it, we saw the antelope, a hundred yards off, and they were feeding down the draw towards us. They had not got wind of us yet. Maybe we weren't excited! There was a small fawn lying in the tall grass, two does and a buck with short horns. We knelt in our concealed entrenchments and pushed the guns through the grass.

"Wait till I say fire," whispered Tom. "You take the fawn, Bill," he commanded.

"No, sir," I said, "I'm going to shoot the buck."

Just then the buck threw up his head suddenly and whistled through his nostrils. Then a quick jump sideways and he was off—but so were our shotguns. Jumping up we saw the antelope in the distance beyond Sand Creek, but there was a small fawn about a quarter of a mile away, going along on three legs.

"I shot him," I exclaimed.

"No, you shot the buck," said Tom.

But we had no time to discuss this interesting question but started off in chase.

"Look over there," said Will, just as we came to the top of the draw, pointing at a ranch house which

stood in a clump of green cottonwoods about a mile away and just on the other side of the creek. And there we saw a man on horseback coming in our direction at a furious gallop. It didn't need another glance to take in the situation.

"It's that Englishman that owns the ranch, and he's after us," exclaimed Jim.

The hunters were hunted, sure enough. Away went Ed, Tom and Will down the slope full speed towards the wire fence a quarter of a mile away. Luckily for them it was down grade. Jim and I followed for a short distance, then dropped into the gully. We looked through the long grass at the boys as they went bounding along like young antelopes, with Will well in the lead.

"There he comes," said Jim, as around the shoulder of the hill swept a black horse, spotted with flying foam, and on him the Englishman with a long cattle whip doubled back in his hand. I shall never forget how red his face was. The boys were now five yards from the fence as he charged down on them. They rolled under just as the Englishman made a cut at them with his whip, barely missing them; and his horse almost plunged into the barbed wire. Jim and I wished most sincerely that we were with the boys on the safe side of the fence.

"I'd jolly well break your rascally necks," the Englishman yelled; "what you little devils mean trespassing on my park and shooting at my deer? I'll have you up before the magistrate."

We couldn't hear what the boys said in reply from

the safe distance of the railroad, but it must have been something disrespectful in regard to his alleged park and deer shooting, for he quickly threw his bridle over his horse's head and started to go through the fence after them, and the boys made tracks down the road. Now the Englishman was a stout man and the barbed wire caught a very firm hold on his corduroys, and struggle as he would, he couldn't get through, and his expressions—ah, well, we will omit them.

"Let's get a board and spank him," said the audacious Jim.

Finding that he could not get through, he tried to get back, with poor success at first, but at last he got loose and got on his horse, and the boys were now at a safe distance. But now Jim and I were in for it; for the Englishman rode straight up the bank of the gulley, and we got under the overhanging bank as far as we could, hoping that he would go by without discovering us. Soon we heard the jingling of his spurs and his horse's hoofs sounded almost over our heads. Then the animal gave a sudden snort and shied off from the bank; evidently he smelt the blood of the rabbit that Jim carried, and the Englishman may have muttered, "Fee, fa, fum, I smell the blood of two Americums."

"What's the matter, you blooming brute?" he growled, as he spurred his horse to the edge of the gulley.

"Get ready to run," Jim whispered to me, "I've got a scheme," and then with a blood-curdling yell,

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he jumped up right under the animal's hoofs and waved the rabbit in the air.

Well, that horse didn't do a thing but bolt up the hill, and the fellow yanking at him and shaking his whip at us. He was a powerful man and soon checked his horse. Then it began to buck vigorously and the Englishman swayed back and forth, and it looked as if his head was going to be snapped off. We enjoyed the spectacle from the safe side of the barbed wire fence. As soon as it looked as if he was going to get his horse under control, we struck out, as we did not desire to be in the vicinity of that Briton's baronial estate any longer.

We were pretty tired and were glad to strike a farmer's wagon for a ride, and as we jolted and rattled towards home, we congratulated ourselves on the fine sport we had enjoyed, and also because we had escaped the tyrannous hand of the Mother-country.

"Anyway, those weren't his antelope any more than they were ours," said Tom.

"But if he thought they were, it amounted to the same thing," said Will, and with which profound remark we considered this international incident closed.

“PIKE’S PEAK OR BUST.”

WE would soon be off for a week in the mountains, and our party stood at attention, all ready to have its picture taken, a souvenir in case we did not return. The foremost figure as well as the most important was the small gray burro, his shaggy bang overhanging his brown, intelligent eyes, and with enormous ears, how he would have suffered if he ever chanced to get an ache in them. On his back he carried two boxes of grub balanced on either side and a tent fitted in between them. Grouped around his burroship was the rest of the party. Tom with a revolver, Jim with a hatchet like the traditional Indian. George had a shot-gun which he carried with tactical precision, and he was destined to become a West Pointer in after years; I had a quirt in one hand and a revolver in the other, both weapons to be used to make the burro go.

As soon as the posing was over Ed began to dance around excitedly and to clutch frantically at his legs. He had inadvertently been standing on an ant heap while the picture was being taken, and the ants had crawled up his trousers legs, hence his excitement. Did you ever have one of those small red creatures bite you? Well, you don’t want to, for they have the

tenacity of a bulldog, the activity of the flea, and the poisonous quality of the mosquito.

The last farewell was said and the procession formed and started down the lane, not very rapidly, however, for the burro was not to be hurried, and moved with the speed of a freight train on an up grade. This did not suit us at all, so George and Ed each grabbed an ear. "Come along, Rarus," they urged, but Rarus did not come along perceptibly, and the rest of us started to shove him from behind, but quickly discovered that he had unusual speed in his hind legs, which, properly used, might have made him a record beater on a race track. Why did we call him Rarus you ask? For the same inscrutable reason that the small boy who is possessed of one ragged shirt and steals green apples is called Fitz Walter Jenkins, and his sister, with pig-tails and a freckled nose, is christened Heloise.

In spite of Rarus's slowness we went along in high spirits, and why not? Just think of it, we were absolutely our own masters for the space of one week and the mountains rose before us, where there was fishing, hunting and adventures of all sorts. It was a clear, bright September day without a fleck of cloud in the sky that rose from the level plains and swept over back of the great range. From the green pastures on one side of the road the trilling notes of a meadow lark came clear and sweet, and the blue jays fluttered among the cottonwoods along the creek. A party of tourists on their way to the cañon, went past us in a four-seated carryall.

They had no sooner got by than some of the women became suddenly convulsed with laughter. They doubtless thought we were very queer looking specimens, with our pistols and wide-spreading sombreros shading our boyish faces. We thought our appearance was more apt to strike awe in the casual passer-by than to arouse unseemly mirth. We had not yet learned that the world takes no man at his own estimate. But we were not to be intimidated by a lot of tenderfeet from the East, so we waved our hats and yelled, "Pike's Peak or bust," and fired a salute with our revolvers. This last demonstration caused an old gentleman in the back seat to lean out of the vehicle and shake his fist at us and yell something, but we failed to catch the drift of his remarks.

It was about the middle of the forenoon when we began the ascent of the Cripple Creek road where it first attacks the slope of the mountain. No sooner did the road become steep, than Rarus, with the perversity of his kind, started up at a rapid gait. It would never do to become separated from our base of supplies, so Jim had to rush after him and finally succeeded in heading him into the bank. We were very hot and thirsty by the time we reached the spring in the bend of the great curve on the west side of Cheyenne, and the sun above us was shining down with direct force; but even he could not heat the underground current that fed that little pool of clear, cold water.

Our next stop was at Gale's cabin. Here the road again takes a steeper rise, and we could follow with

our eyes its white line on the pine-clad slope above, until it curved over the divide where the waters run to the west instead of the east. Near the cabin was a little pool of water overhung by bushes, and back of it a cove where the grass was fresh and green and there was a small clump of quaking aspens. Old Gale himself was chopping wood near the road. He was one of the old residents of that section and was bleary eyed and wobbly from too much liquor, and was rarely entirely sober.

"Goin' prospectin', boys?" he inquired.

"No, we are just camping out."

"When I was you boys' age I didn't have no time for tramping round mountains. I had ter git in and dig."

"Yes, sir," we replied, not much interested. We had heard observations of that kind before, and if industry was responsible for his present dilapidated condition, we thought it had better be avoided.

"That's right," he continued, "and I was a Federal soldier onct, but I'm goin' back to York State to die."

We knew that these affecting reminiscences were apt to lead to tears on the part of the old man, so we aroused Rarus from one of his day dreams and started on.

"What's yer hurry, boys?" he said.

"We've got to make the divide before noon," Jim said.

"If yer fellers see my wife anywhere, tell her she'd better come right home."

"We'll head her back your way," yelled Jim jocosely.

It chanced that Gale married a woman about half his age, but she had left him inside of a week and gone with a handsome prospector to Cripple Creek.

It was later than noon when we reached the top of the divide below St. Peter's Dome. Tom and Ed had delayed us by sitting down on every convenient log by the roadside—and there were many of them—and refusing to go another step until they had something to eat. Jim would not allow any halt.

"There's a fine spring below that rock, where we can eat," he said, pointing to a wall of granite near the top of the crest. "And it isn't far," he added.

But it was farther than it looked.

However, we reached it at last and found a spring near the base of the rock, overshadowed by alders and chokecherry bushes. The little pool of water was like a mirror backed with gravel, and it was framed in fallen leaves, and a tiny rivulet flowed from it down a long slope of granite that might have accommodated half of Niagara. We loosened our belts, took off our sombreros and mopped our sweaty brows, and prepared to eat our lunch in comfort. We left Rarus to wander around in the deep grass and graze from its tender growth, but he seemingly preferred the tin cans that a party of picnickers had left scattered around, and he licked off their glowing labels and swallowed them with much relish.

We were really in the mountains now, and as you cannot appreciate the ocean from the shallow shore line, but must sail far out until your ship is but an atom in the center of the dark blue waters, so must

you push beyond the low-lying foothills to the depths of the mighty ranges to feel their loneliness and sublimity. Far below us the line of the road we had wearily traveled that morning was a meandering streak where it followed the curves of the mountain, as though cut into its side by the sinuous stroke of a gigantic whip. To the east was a little park with a conical mountain in the center, partly clothed with a dense growth of pine which looked like a black shadow resting on its slope, and beyond, across many sunny chasms, rose the reverse slope of Cheyenne Mountain with its rock-strewn ridges, pines and precipices. In many a little valley were splashes of autumnal red and yellow, and here and there were rivulets and lakes of color among the pines on the slopes, and like a fine rain of driving silver appeared the clumps of naked aspens on the mountain's sides in the sunlight, where the leaves had fallen, leaving their delicate branches bare.

We had finished our lunch and were lying at ease in the shade, lazily looking out over the scene below us, when Jim exclaimed: "I hear the Cripple Creek stage coming."

He must have had the instinctive hearing of the American Indian, for none of the rest of us could hear anything except the water tinkling down the rock.

"Let's hide and shoot when they go past and make them think they're held up," said Jim.

This scheme might have its disadvantages, for it was no uncommon thing for the stage to be robbed

on this particular road, and our joke might be taken seriously. Tom, George and Ed each selected a tree to hide behind, while Jim and I lay back of a fallen log that was in the shelter of some thick bushes. We didn't have to wait long before there came the crack of a whip and the rumble of wheels, and before we realized it the two white leaders of the six-horse team dashed in sight, and the yellow stage, crowded inside and out with miners and tourists, lurched over the divide and went sliding down the grade with locked wheels. We fired our pistols into the air and yelled wildly. Then came quick answering shots and wilder yells from the top of the coach, and the driver dove under the box, but recovered his equilibrium as he caught sight of our pack burro and interfered in time to prevent a tourist with a broad-brimmed hat, red handkerchief round his neck, and a glittering rifle from shooting George, who had incautiously stepped out from behind his tree. Our first shot had caused a great commotion inside the coach, and one young man attempted to crawl under the seat. He explained afterwards that he was looking for his pistol. We heard this subsequently when we accosted the driver at the corner of Huerfano Street in Colorado Springs before the stage started on its trip to the camp. We revealed to him our identity and also asked him to drink soda water with us.

"Soda water!" he gasped. "No, I don't drink. It's bad for my health. And ye're the boys that did the firin' by the divide last week. Next time you try any of your fool tricks yer'll be kilt."

"Scared you all right," laughed Jim. "I seen you dodge."

"Next time yer see me dodge, young feller, yer'll wish yer hadn't," he replied briefly.

But to return to the mountains. We felt quite refreshed after the stage coach incident and ready for another good pull at the mountain road. After some effort we got Rarus headed in the right direction and started briskly off. A stiff breeze was blowing from the northeast quarter that filled Rarus's sails—I should say his ears—and we were soon going at a four-knot gait.

Our way now lay on the level for quite a distance through a narrow valley. On the south side was a long, low mountain with two castles of rock placed at quite a distance apart upon its crest, and a gallant army of pine trees was charging up the slope to capture the stronghold. A whole corps was massed along the base of the ridge in dark green ranks, but the number of them grew less and less towards the crest; many had fallen and were lying prostrate and naked, while, within a few hundred yards of the top, a gallant pine was waving to his followers to come on.

Late in the afternoon the sky became overcast, and over the Wet Mountain Valley behind the range a thunderstorm was gathering and the peaks seemed to lift themselves higher and higher towards the black sky. At last the drops began to fall like a scattering fire of round and leaden bullets, and then they came faster and faster. We faced the first rush of the

storm with exhilaration, but soon our clothes became soaked and clung clammily to our statuesque figures, while our sombreros flopped about our faces. We were a funny-looking crowd, and Rarus appeared deeply dejected with his ears drooping lower and lower.

Ed and George went splashing ahead through the puddles singing: "Upidee a dee a die, upidee a die," with emphasis on the "*die*," while Ed looked like the endman in a minstrel show, for the color from his hat-band had run green over his face. Jim and I got under a yellow slicker, but it failed to keep us dry; there wasn't enough for both, and the gray rain came down faster than ever, shutting out the mountain summits and moving in long swaying lines through the cañons and valleys. By and by we came to where the road branched, and then there was trouble.

"I know this road goes to Cripple Creek," maintained Tom, indicating the one to the left.

"When you don't know, take the road that's traveled most," said Jim, wisely.

"But we're going to Seven Lakes, and I know this one goes there," I said, pointing to the parallel ruts cut into the grass and running up into the pines.

We both took sides for our respective routes, sort of road agents, except George, who seated himself on a wet stump—there was no fence near by—and shook the water out of his sombrero. We might have been there yet if a *deus ex machina* in the shape of Rarus had not decided for us. In the excitement of debate we had forgotten our long-eared friend, and before we

realized what he was about, he was trotting with short, quick steps up the trail towards Seven Lakes, the frying-pan beating musically on the gruo box.

I might have cried, "A Daniel come to judgment," but instead I yelled, "Whoa, there, Rarus." "Hold on there, you darned jack-rabbit," the chorus yelled, but it takes more than moral suasion to stop a burro when his mind is fully made up. So we splashed ahead after him while Jim and George took a short cut through the wet underbrush and got in ahead of him. When we came up, Jim was yelling down his ear very much as you talk to a deaf person on a long distance telephone.

"What you run off for?" he screamed.

"Eh?" said Rarus. "A little louder please; I don't hear you," looking all the time perfectly innocent but slightly depressed.

"Where's Ed?" I inquired, looking around.

"He has struck off down the Cripple Creek road," said George.

It was clear that Ed preferred the broad way that would lead to ultimate destruction.

"He'll get tired of going alone," said Jim.

We had now come to a place where the road ran through some very thick undergrowth and were trudging along with our heads down when suddenly a man jumped into our midst with a fierce yell and leveled a pistol at Jim's head.

"Throw up your hands."

George, who was in the lead, turned at the word and had his gun leveled at the intruder.

"Oh, it's just Ed," I said, coming out from behind a tree where I had taken refuge.

"Thought you'd scare us," said Jim with affected composure, the color coming back into his face.

"I almost put some buckshot into your legs," said George, grinning coolly.

"You fellers was scared all right," said Ed, as he returned his pistol to his holster.

We maintained a sullen silence as we went on through the gloomily dripping wood, but our minds were bent on getting even. Jim went ahead to select a good camping place. After a while we heard him calling to us from a knoll to the north of the road.

"Come up here, I've found a dandy place."

With difficulty we got Rarus turned from the road. He evidently thought the trail the thing, doubtless having traveled it before, but we finally got him headed through the high wet grass towards the rise that Jim had selected. A large pine stood there, under the branches of which the earth was bare and comparatively dry. Not far away a little rivulet of clear water went gurgling along through the overhanging grass and jumping down diminutive waterfalls on its way to join the brawling mountain stream in the valley below. We would have hailed this brook with delight if the day had been clear and sunny and our throats parched and dry, but we were soaked to our inner tissues and the little stream merely seemed to add wetness to dampness.

"This place is all right, Jim," said George, and we all agreed except Ed, who had been nosing around.

"We are too near those ant heaps," he protested, pointing to two pyramids of dirt covered with tiny gravel that occupied the center of two bare spots of earth. A burnt child dreads the blaze, but we did not sympathize with Ed's point of view.

"You're a bold pirate," I said scornfully, "holding men up with a pistol and then afraid of little ants no bigger than a pin."

"All right, but you'll be sorry," he said, speaking from the reserve of a bitter experience.

After much struggling and tugging, we got the wet ropes that held the pack untied, and piled the things under the tree. Tom and George rigged up the tent, and the rest of us yanked logs and broken pine limbs down the mountain side for the big fire. It took all of Jim's ingenuity to make the tiny flame catch on to the wet pine slivers, but his efforts were at last rewarded and the fire caught one of the larger sticks and then another, and another, until at last it had grown to full size and was ready to devour with its red and ravenous tongues the largest logs we could feed it.

The cheery light shone into the tent where the blankets were spread over a litter of small pine boughs, and we revolved around the central fire like the satellites of Saturn or dark planets, while nebulous clouds of steam rose from our damp exteriors. We were indeed blue and chilled, but the fire soon warmed us thoroughly. Ed, who was as good as a French chef when it came to frying bacon and batter-cakes, began to get supper, while Jim made the

coffee with the skill of a frontiersman. The table was simply the floor of the tent, and we lay stretched out in Oriental luxury on the blankets. Each one had a tin plate on which were beans and sizzling bacon, and the coffee in tin cups was black as thick darkness. Oh, my! but it was strong, but I bet that the boy who in later years struck it rich and perchance lives like a merchant prince, "when the wine in his glass is red, longs for that mountain coffee instead."

Years have passed since then, but perhaps we shall get together again in the future, and George will put aside his military armor and return the sword to the scabbard, and Ed will shut the massive cover of the ledger with a slam, while Jim will leave Mrs. Jim to look after the baby, and we shall strike the old trail once more, boys, again, and catch anew the elusive trout, and in the circle of the firelight tell yarns of the intervening years, and some of them will be thrilling, and the sounds of strife and humdrum life shall not reach us in our camp behind the protecting bulwarks of the range—so be it.

After supper Ed and George seemed inspired by the coffee and the altitude, and executed a war dance around the fire, and then Ed started in to give an exhibition of fancy riding on Rarus, who was standing in the wet grass, the image of dejection. Ed took a reef in his long legs and commenced to slap the burro vigorously with his sombrero.

"Get up yer, 'Rarus,' 'Maud S.,'" he adjured. "Twist his tail, boys. Now we are off."

This last remark came near being prophetic, for

Rarus started off on a short hard lope, and jumping the narrow stream in his path, came down stiff-legged on the other side.

"Ouch! he's got a backbone like a razor-back hog," yelled Ed, as he slid off in front of Rarus's ears, who had evidently had enough of that kind of exercise, for, putting his head down, he struck out with his hind legs, hitting Jim on the kneecap. We assisted Jim to the tent and he lay for a while on the blankets, rather white 'round the gills.

The night had now settled down on the mountains, but the camp fire made an oasis of light in the rainy gloom. How those pitch pine logs with the resinous life of the mountains in their veins did burn, not at all like your dry, sapless woods, and while the flame sprang into the dark, in spires and pinnacles of quivering fire, we sat around and told yarns, the most frightful and blood-curdling we could devise. Jim's ought to have won the prize. It was about that Mexican desperado, Espinoza.

"Did you fellers ever hear of that greaser Espinoza? My father knows about him. He was in this country in the early days and started out to kill all the white men, women and children. He was a good shot, but didn't take any chances, but crawled right up to them and shot them dead. He was so slick that they couldn't catch him, and so the Governor put a thousand dollars on him, dead or alive. There were two cowboys working on a ranch near Cheyenne Mountain; they heard about the reward and started out to trail him and soon they struck it red-hot, too.

The greaser had killed a woman down near Turkey Creek; she was coming down a path to the spring after some water, never thinking of any trouble, when he up and killed her. Those two cowboys heard of it, and they said the money might be blanked, but they were going to get that fellow and they would pay for his funeral expenses themselves. Well, they followed him through the foothills, picking his trail like Indians. You see, his scheme was to get away off where they wasn't looking for him and then kill somebody else. It was just getting dark when they tracked him to Dead Man's Cañon. You know where that is."

"Yes," we said, "go ahead."

I remembered the place well. It was south of Cheyenne Mountain just as you leave the plains and go into the foothills. There were great slabs of red rock on one side and a gray wall on the other. It is a wild looking place, but there is good grazing for cattle in it.

"Well, those two fellers were riding down a cow path in the south end of the cañon when the one ahead stopped. 'Look there, Bill,' he said, pointing to some blue smoke way down in the bottom of the cañon. You could bet none of us could have seen it. 'It's that greaser cooking his grub,' said Bill, and they hitched their bronchos in a clump of bushes. Then they crawled through the bushes and the long grass very cautious, and they kept the wind of him because he was like a wild beast and would have

scented them. Then they got behind a low ridge and took a squint over."

"Who told you all this?" inquired Ed skeptically.

"My pa, I told you, and don't you jump in again or I'll quit."

"Go ahead, Jim," I said, "don't mind him."

"Well, they looked over and they saw him bending over his fire, and he had on fine clothes, all silver and velvet and tassels, and his hat ran up to a peak, and his gun was right by him, and he kept looking around as if he was expecting trouble. He had a red scar on the side of his face and he looked like a blessed rattlesnake. All of a sudden he seemed to feel that there was somebody or something around, and he reached for his gun; but they had the drop on him and jumped up and plugged him good. But he got one shot in Bill's leg, and when they came up to him he was lying on the ground snarling like a wildcat, and he spit something at them in Spanish and died. Then those cowboys went to call on the Governor. He was sitting in his office with his feet on the table smoking a good cigar."

"Hum, s'pose you was there," said Ed.

But Jim was all right, as we told him, he had the historical imagination. We sat on Ed until Jim got through.

"'We've got that greaser, Espinoza,' they said, 'and we want to see the color of your money.' 'Produce him,' says the Governor, flecking the ashes from his cigar into a spittoon. Then Bill went into the corridor and brought in a gunny sack——" But I shall

follow Jim no further except to say that those two cowboys got their money and left Denver two days afterwards and went back to the range "dead broke."

We sat watching the fire for a few minutes after Jim had finished. Then we suddenly sprang to our feet, for from the darkness of the mountain side came a frightful sound, long drawn out, that ended in a rasping Yeong-e-yong. Jim picked up a rock and hurled it in the direction whence came the racket.

"Close your face, you old jackass," he yelled.

After this diversion was over we put on an extra large log and rolled into our blankets. We had just launched out from the shore of wakefulness when Ed aroused us with the information that the ants were biting his legs. He made a searching investigation and found something he claimed was a bite. We urged him strongly to go to sleep and not to bother us, and then there was silence for a while and we were just dozing off when we were aroused again by Ed crawling over our prostrate forms.

"There's the moon, boys," he said.

We told him it did not interest us, as we had seen it before, but we were now thoroughly awake, so we got up and stirred the fire, which was dying low. The mellow light shone into our tent from the moon, which was careening through the broken clouds that looked dark underneath, but their sides were shining in the soft and silvery light, while along the mountain slopes moved the procession of the shadows separated by intervening spaces of light. Beauty and mystery veiled the ranges, and the dark pines on

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the sides of the mountain were wrapped in solemn loveliness.

We got very little sleep that night, for Ed kept adjuring us to wake up and look at the moon every little while. I dare say that it was the coffee that had got on to his nerves and caused him to take such an interest in the beauteous orb of night, for he never grew up to be a great astronomer, so far as I know. After a while the moon slid down behind the pine-clad ridge, and we had a chance to go to sleep.

"All aboard for Seven Lakes! Pike's Peak or bust!"

We threw the blankets off our heads and sat up. There was George standing in front of the tent beating a tin pan. We stepped out into the gray dawn, and the cold air made us shiver. How fresh and clear the mountains looked, even in the early shadow which became lighter and lighter, and then, over the crest of Cheyenne, shot silver spears of light across the valleys and cañons, and struck with their gleam the bosom of the range behind us. Then a piece of steel-blue disk was visible, and the sun god gathering his golden reins in his hand drove his chariot of fire into the open heavens, and the mountains were filled with his glory.

After breakfast George and I started in to wash the tin plates, cups, knives and forks, we being placed on that special committee, while the others struck the tent and prepared to pack the things on Rarus. We found the water in the stream extremely cold, and it made our arms ache to the elbow, and then the grease simply would not come off the plates, although we

scoured them energetically with gravel, and when we were through there were still streaks on them and they did not shine like the glistening sun, as they would have done had we used warm water and somebody's soap.

We got through in time to watch Ed and Jim fasten the boxes and the tent on Rarus by means of the famous "diamond hitch." They made a brilliant and glittering success of it. Now, children, I am not going to tell you how it was done, because it is a trade secret, and then I do not fully understand it myself. Ed was very proud of that "hitch," and it gave him a dignity and prestige that he carried through the entire trip, and if he had struck I don't know exactly what we would have done. It is no slight trick to fasten boxes on a diminutive burro so that they will not come off when he runs between the trees or takes a tumble down a steep mountain side. Ed gave a final pull to the ropes.

"Now she will do; can't shake them off," he said confidently. "Gee haw! Rarus, get up," and the procession started up the trail. We felt like veteran mountaineers with our broad sombreros, pistols and pack burro—it was quite the real thing.

In passing I may remark that there is a romance about a trail (as a certain Western writer has pointed out) that a dusty, prosaic road entirely lacks. We followed it under the murmuring pines, along the shelving mountain side, across brawling mountain streams, and through clumps of quaking aspens. It was about half-past ten when we crossed the ridge

and saw, eight hundred feet below us, the basin of the Seven Lakes. In reality these lakes are but large ponds, the most important one being about a mile by three-quarters; but they lie ten thousand feet above the sea, and perhaps ponds at that altitude become lakes. I don't know.

The largest one lay below us with not a ripple on its green blue surface, and half across it stretched the shadow of the mountain with an irregular fringe from the pines that stood on the ridge. The two great mountains, Old Baldy and Pike's Peak, guard these lakes, which were like precious emeralds in the rough casket of the basin. A part of the western slope of Old Baldy rises from the edge of the largest lake, and every morning he gazes down into the dark mirror to see if his snowy wig is on straight; while some miles to the northwest stands the Peak in his naked power and forbidding grandeur. To the west of the lakes lies a long, low ridge covered with fallen pines, and beyond it is Cripple Creek. Skirting around the largest lake, we came to a splendid place to pitch our tent. It was between two large pines, and just below was a large spring of water, so clear and cold that it might have come from the blue heart of an iceberg.

"Hello, what are these tracks?" said Tom, pointing to some large round prints in the gravel below the spring.

Jim inspected them critically.

"Those are mountain lion tracks," he said, and we gathered around and looked at them with interest.

"Perhaps they come down here every night to drink," remarked Ed.

"We'll watch to-night. I wouldn't mind getting one of them beggars," said George.

We pitched our tent between the pine trees and arranged things more systematically than at our first camp, and then we turned Rarus loose to graze in the small meadow on the east side of the lake.

It is remarkable how quickly you feel at home in a camp; a moment before you took possession of it, it was simply a bare spot of earth, but after you have put up the tent, spread out the blankets, and built a fire, you have a feeling as though you had owned that particular place for some time, and when you pull up stakes, a few days later, and take a farewell glance at the spot where the tent just stood with a litter of pine boughs and scattered tin cans, it seems like leaving a temporary home. You will not pass that way again, and there is mingled with the feeling of regret a sense of pleasure in starting out for pastures new. How quickly our human affections send out clinging tendrils to clothe the bleakness of our surroundings as with a growth of green ivy.

But to return to the business in hand. After getting everything arranged about the camp we started out to have a good time; the mountain world was ours, what should we do with it? We might fish or hunt, climb or swim. Tom took the shot-gun and started up the wooded slope of Old Baldy after grouse while Jim, George and I were soon *en route* to the lake with our tackle and fishing poles of slender quak-

ing aspens. We got grasshoppers for bait. Ed stayed in camp, said he preferred rest and quiet. We did not wonder at this, and we left him reading a yellow back novel that Jim owned. Jim was the first to reach the shore of the lake.

"By Jove, boys, here's a raft."

There it was in a small cove. It was was a water-logged affair about twelve feet square, constructed of pine logs and held together by three strips of wood, one nailed at each end, and another across the middle. George discovered a couple of poles hidden in the grass.

"You think it will hold us?" I inquired, anxiously.

You see, the lake was at least two hundred feet deep and the water was ice cold.

"Of course it will," replied Jim.

So we took off our shoes, rolled up our pants, and got aboard. I stood in the middle, and Jim and George took a pole apiece, and standing near the side of the raft, pushed off with vigor. We were about fifty feet from shore when the old raft began to slowly settle down under us. Now neither Jim nor I could swim, being Colorado boys to whom swimming is denied, save in muddy irrigating ditches of no great depth. The water rose to our knees, and then the raft gave a sideways slide from under us, and George launched out towards the shore and, relieved of his weight, the thing came to the surface, and by slow degrees Jim and I got our frail craft to shore. It took about as long as it does to dock an ocean liner. I jumped ashore. It was evident that three was a

crowd for that craft, so I generously gave my place up to George.

“I don’t like to fish anyway,” I said.

So I remained safely on shore, and with my feet drying in the sun, I watched the two fishermen as they knelt at the side of the raft, still as statues, with the reflection from the water wrinkling across their faces. Suddenly George awoke to activity and began hauling in his line.

“I got him all right and he’s a big one, too,” he exclaimed, and our eager eyes already saw a gleaming trout wriggling in the air, and then George pulled up a long and dripping weed—so often on the ocean of life—but this observation is so obvious that I shall leave the reader to make the reflection without my interference. I soon became tired of watching the two fishermen on the placid bosom of the lake catching weeds, so I put on my shoes and struck off for the mountains in search of Tom. I was soon among the dark pines and around me rose the forest primeval. Into their dusky isles the noonday sun could scarce send one shaft of radiance, etc. As I went on, the slope grew steeper and steeper, and at last I came to a tangled watercourse and with extreme difficulty I made my way along it, crawling under fallen trees and through the clinging undergrowth, making a great racket. Then something made me glance quickly up to the bank opposite, and there I saw a shot-gun pointing towards me. It looked as if a double-barrel six-inch gun was looking at me.

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"Don't shoot, it's me," I yelled and dropped behind a boulder.

Tom emerged rather pale from behind his ambush.

"I thought you was a bear," he said. I accepted his explanation.

He had killed a grouse and a snow-shoe rabbit. This latter is something of a curiosity and is only found in high altitudes. The lower part of his hind legs were much elongated and were like gray felt runners, and on these he goes coasting down the fields of snow with as much enjoyment as a small boy feels as he slides on his sled down a steep hillside. We went down to the lake and watched Jim and George pilot their craft ashore. There was a stiff west breeze and the waves, which were about a foot high, kept their yacht awash from stem to stern.

"How many weeds did you catch, George?" I inquired.

In answer he held up three large trout, sides speckled black and red, and their backs a shining olive green. Then Tom showed his trophies.

"What a funny looking rabbit. Look at its legs!" exclaimed George.

"We will have an A number one dinner; rabbit, grouse, and trout. Whew!" exclaimed Jim.

"And bear meat," I added, but Tom looked so glum that I did not pursue the subject further.

"Where's Ed?" Tom asked, as we approached the camp. "I don't see him anywhere."

Then he lifted the flap of the tent and looked in and beckoned us silently forward. Ed was flat on his back with his mouth open, snoring. Jim filled a tin cup at the spring and we stood in a silent group around the sufferer, who seemed to find much difficulty in breathing. We did not look at each other at this trying moment; our mouths were clamped tight shut, and George was bending double, as with inward pain. It was pathetic, but perhaps the cold water would revive our gasping friend. Gently Jim tipped the cup above Ed's open mouth atilt, and the water went down his throat.

S-s-s-s-s-sputter!!! and a strangling cough.

"What you fellers doing?" he gasped.

"Get up and see the moon, Ed," Tom exclaimed.

"Oh, my! my!" exclaimed George, as he rolled round on the blankets. "Help me up, you fellers, I feel kind of weak," and he went off into another paroxysm.

"I'll help you up," said Ed, trying to get in an effective kick; but George tackled him low and they rolled round on the blankets, but they were preeminently good-natured, and no harm was done.

It was now about the middle of the afternoon and we made a light lunch on crackers and cheese, reserving the game for dinner. After this was finished, George and I started over to the deserted house, half a mile distant, which had once answered to the name of a hotel. The others brought out the blankets and spread them between the roots of the pines, making very comfortable couches, and lay down with

their sombreros over their faces and their feet sticking out into the sunshine.

We found the hotel to be a two-story structure, much dilapidated and built of puncheon logs, that is, planed smooth on one side; the spaces between them were filled with plaster. It had once been the way-side inn for the tourists to the Peak, viz., the Bear Creek trail. One of the earlier proprietors of this hostelry was a queer old character, whom, I believe, Mark Twain has sketched in one of his books of travel. He had a peculiar theory and it was a strong one: too. He held that to make the mountain air entirely salubrious, it was necessary that there should be a dead animal—it mattered not whether it was a mule, cow, or horse, so long as it was thoroughly dead—in the front yard. The effect may be imagined on the tourists. They can truly be said to have been transients. One day an Englishman stopped at the Seven Lakes Hotel and in a short time he began to sniff suspiciously.

“Oh, I say, landlord,” he remarked in loud tones, “what makes that beastly stink?”

The old man explained his queer theory to the astounded Briton.

“Have that beast removed, sir, or I shall leave your hotel.”

The old man stood firm to his principles and accordingly the Englishman left and started immediately for the signal station on the Peak, which he reached about midnight and kicked vigorously on the door until he gained admission.

In rummaging around I made a discovery of interest. It was nothing less than an exciting dime novel that was in some rubbish back of the door of the dining-room. I took it back to camp with me.

"Here, Ed, you read it aloud," I said.

"Can't, my throat's sore where you fellers poured that water down my neck."

But he afterwards relented and consented to elocute for us. How thrilling that story was! A gloomy house in gloomy, foggy London, and in one of the ugly, hideous rooms there was—what do you think?—a trap door, a real trap door. It opened as if by some unseen hand, and we looked down into the reeking darkness and we could hear the moving current of the muddy Thames below. We stood there, and then heard a sound as of something dragging along the floor towards the door of the room. It slowly opened, and there were two black-whiskered ruffians in red shirts, dragging along by the hair!—But I am petrified with horror, and my pen refuses to trace another line, even in this red ink. Ed read on until the sun sank behind the western ridge, then we started in to get supper. Ed made a success in cooking the grouse, but we were very much disappointed in its size as it was not nearly so large as its appearance had led us to expect. It was very much of a feather-weight.

While at supper we discussed our plans for the morrow. Ed still insisted on going to Cripple Creek, as he was very anxious to stake out a claim. •

"May be we will strike it rich like Stratton, and then we won't have to go to school any more."

"What would you do if you had a million?" I inquired generally.

"Oh, I would get a coach for the foot-ball team and some new suits," said George. "Then I would go to West Point."

That was the end and aim of George's ambition, and the flash of the sword dazzled his eyes more than the glitter of gold.

"If I had a million," Tom soliloquized, "I would buy that fine house on Cascade Avenue with the tennis court; then I would go to Europe in style, and I would get my military company some new rifles, 40-70, and new uniforms."

"They need 'em," said Jim unkindly. "I tell you, boys, what I would do if I had a million. I would buy that black horse that English dude rides, and a broncho's saddle with carved leather, and I would have big spurs that would jingle, and leather chaps."

"What would you do, Ed?" I inquired.

"Oh, I'd go over to Cripple Creek and salt my mine before I talked about what I was going to do with the money. You fellers, you make me tired; are you going or ain't you?"

"We are going to the Peak. That is what we came for, and if you are fool enough to go to Cripple Creek, you can," retorted Jim tartly.

This seemed to settle the matter for the time being. That night we had a more glorious fire than the one

on the previous evening. It was built in a bare place above the spring and near the big pines that stood as sentinels close by our tent. There was the loneliness of the night and the loneliness of the great range around us, and shadows haunted the slopes behind us, while the wind touched the dark harp of the pines to a tone of weird sadness. How vividly the memory of that camp fire rises from its dying coals shrouded in gray ashes. Its very spirit seems caught in these lines by R. C. Rogers:

“Sage brush to kindle with,
Quaking ash to glow,
Pine roots to last until the dawn winds blow.
Oh, smoke full of fancy,
And dreams gone to smoke
At the camp fires dead long ago.”

We sat with hands clasped around our knees, gazing at the leaping flames that stabbed the darkness, when we heard a stealthy step in the shadows back of us, and we turned quickly and apprehensively. Then the figure of a man slouched into the circle of the light.

“Howdy,” said the apparition.

“How, how,” replied George, grinning.

The stranger turned and fixed him with his mild hazel eye.

“I ain’t no Injun,” he said.

“Who be you?” inquired Jim, adapting himself to the requirements of dialect.

“I live in the cove up thar,” he replied, pointing

with an indefinite thumb back into the darkness. "Been thar nigh on to three years."

Then he seated himself on the root of the pine and looked at the fire. He was young, probably twenty-five years of age, with a tow-headed beard (that is what an Irishman might have said) which would have been a Van Dyke if properly trimmed, and he had on his head a gray slouch hat turned down all around and pulled well over his ears; and there he sat, with his hands flopping carelessly over his knees. He appeared entirely indifferent to us.

"Where did you come from?" I inquired, the inevitable and important question in the West, where everybody has come from somewhere else.

"From back East. Used to live close to Staunton, Virginia. You boys wanter fish down by the lake? I get all I want to eat thar. Spear them with this yer," and he held up a weapon which looked like a rusty trident.

George, Jim and I said that we would very much like to fish.

"Bring your gun along," he said, and we started for the lake. He guided us to one of the smaller ponds, which was rather shallow. The light from our pine torches cast columns of red flames on the quiet opaque water. Our guide, who was in the lead, suddenly raised his spear and shot it down into the water and brought up a big trout who had been dozing near shore. He handed him over to George.

"No, you keep it," but the stranger slipped the trout into George's pocket.

We then came to a shallow cove where the bottom was gravelly and there was a large fellow out from shore, beyond the reach of his spear.

"Give me the gun."

I yielded it up and he took aim at the water, as I thought, quite a distance this side of the fish.

"You won't hit him," I said.

Then he fired. Zip! went the ball through the water; then he waded in and felt around with his hands, and finally brought out a large salmon trout, a foot and a half in length.

"You'se got to shoot under 'em," he explained.

We all tried our luck at shooting, but George was the only one who killed any fish. When we got back to camp we tried to persuade our friend and ally to take at least one of the fish, but he waved away our offers with a graceful motion of his hand and shuffled off into the darkness.

We were very tired, and rolling into our blankets were soon asleep. I don't know what time it was when I was suddenly awakened by Ed poking me in the side.

"Listen, fellers, what's that!"

We sat up inquiringly, with our ears intent, and in a moment, through the stillness of the night, far up the slope of the mountain, came a cry such as none of us had ever heard before.

"Mountain lions," exclaimed Jim.

Then we jumped for our weapons. I got the shotgun; George grabbed his Winchester, pulled the lever down and threw a cartridge in; Tom captured the

Springfield, and Jim and Ed a revolver apiece. It was a thrilling moment as we went stooping cautiously out of the tent with our hands clasping those protecting guns, and indeed we felt a live affection for them and would not have parted with them for a good deal. We stood grouped together in the shadow of the pine, for the moon had just risen over the solemn summit of Old Baldy and was holding a steady course though a pale blue sky with no clouds except a long island of white just above the western horizon.

How black the pines looked, massed upon the great slopes above us; and below, the lake lay in placid light, and then again came that scream of the wild animal, nearer, much nearer this time. George took immediate command and posted Tom, who was a cool and accurate shot, in the lower branches of the big pine overlooking the spring, and Ed was with him. Jim and I were placed to the left of Tom's tree and a little back, behind an abattis of fallen trees, and I was very glad to have Jim's company. George took the most exposed position on the extreme left, about seventy-five feet from the pine tree where Tom was. We could just make out his light sombrero as he crouched in the dark shadow of some overhanging bushes.

We were not to fire until George did, unless attacked. Though not experienced hunters, we were Western boys and knew enough to keep perfectly quiet. There was not a whisper from any of us. We waited, and a half-hour must have passed and not a sound from our silent and crafty enemy in the pines. Jim and I scanned again and again the open space of

moonlit meadow, but we saw nothing except the long-eared Rarus, who was standing quietly and apparently asleep in the deep grass, but suddenly he woke up and we could see his great ears turned towards the mountains.

"He sees something, sure," said Jim.

Then suddenly he put back his ears and squealed with terror. The time for action had almost come and we got slowly and carefully to our feet, grabbing our weapons tight, but still we saw nothing. Just then Jim's sharp eyes caught sight of some objects moving along the lower edge of the pines. I felt that there was something there, but as yet could see nothing; but I had not long to wait. They were really coming, moving out from the shadow of the pines, not stepping forth with the majesty of the lion, but creeping sinuously through the tall grass, and we could mark their course by the waving blades as they crept, one behind the other.

I placed the shot-gun on the fallen tree and waited breathless with excitement, and then we had our first glimpse of the foremost lion,—a long, lithe fellow of tawny color and his tail was beating the ground down and sideways in feline wrath, and his small ears lay back on the flat head, while his eyes gleamed with greenish ferocity, their glance fixed on the tree where Tom was hiding. Every muscle was intent for the spring. Then there came a flash from the shadow where George stood, and with a snarl, a yellow body shot through the opening where we stood. I turned and fired, but it was gone, and across the

moonlit meadow, the other lion was going with long leaps. Tom had dropped down and was firing rapidly after the fleeing beast, while George ran as fast as he could to head it off from the mountain slope. Then the lion suddenly disappeared.

Our attention was now called to Rarus, and we could not help laughing even in our excitement. He stood in the long grass with his head down and his hind feet were shooting out with the rapidity of a rapid-firing gun. He was strictly game. We could see George now, a dark spot in the shining meadow near the place where the lion had disappeared. Tom hurried to join him, while the rest of us took up the trail of the other fellow. There were here and there fresh spots of blood, showing that he had been hit, but we soon lost the trace among the dark shadows of the pines. Tom and George were equally unsuccessful; their prey had evidently escaped to the slope of Old Baldy to join his comrade.

We did not get to sleep very soon that night, not indeed until the dawn was approaching, and when we awoke the sun was in full possession of the morning, and its yellow light was sifting through the canvas slopes of our tent, and the big black flies were buzzing around in the warm air. George and Jim started off immediately to trail our friends of the night before, while the rest of us broke camp and packed Rarus, who appeared as phlegmatic as ever in spite of his narrow escape of the previous night. George and Jim returned in an hour, but bringing no scalp. Our friend from Virginia came down to see us off.

"You 'uns got your painter last night?" he inquired languidly, seating himself on a rock.

"No, we killed him but he got away," I explained.

"Lots of them people round here, but I don't worry them and they don't bother me."

We were now ready and started off in high spirits to strike the trail for the Peak, while the Southerner slouched off to the lake with his fishing spear; he disdained the use of a tackle; and the last we saw of him he was sitting on a little hummock near the lake—a lone human figure in the wilderness of the mountains, cut off from the world, a piece of drift flung far into the secluded recesses of the range; and a sense of his lonely isolation came to me, and an undefined feeling of the contrast that was between our life and his. Oh, the exhilaration of that morning in the mountains, the air and sky filled with the freshness and clearness of those high altitudes, and what a day was before us!

Our motto was Excelsior! We advanced to the attack of the Peak through a valley where a lake of former times had once been; it had slowly retreated and left its floor to be covered with grass which was set with scattered stars and constellations of blue and white flowers. The expanse of green narrowed to a river toward the head of the valley, and then became a mere rivulet. The trail was a black thread of loam along the lower part of the ridge where the green wave of grass had spread up the slope, and then it crossed to the western side and ran into the pines, and beyond them it struck the rock-strewn slopes above

the timber line. Before us were the naked shoulders of the Peak, their tremendous expanse covered thickly with broken rocks, and the Peak rose above them with white head against the blue sky. As we advanced across the wilderness of broken boulders, his summit seemed ever receding from us. The view widened and grew wider still, and the air became so rarefied that we breathed with difficulty. By and by we came to patches of white and then to drifts, and at last to broad fields of snow, and below were the rock-strewn slopes, desolate in their vastness.

It was noon when we reached the top and found that a large party of tourists was ahead of us. They had come up that morning from Manitou to see the inspiring view, but most of them were in the Signal Station, either lying down or sitting with heads resting on the table in the center of the room. Were they overcome by the magnificence of the view? you ask. Not at all, but they either had blinding headaches or were sick at their stomachs, or, to be more elegant, they were affected with nausea. There was no excuse for them, absolutely none, for the old Peak was as steady as a battle-ship in a quiet bay. We swaggered around with that same sense of conscious superiority that Mark Twain displayed on the memorable occasion when he stood on the steamer's deck on a rough morning and received the passengers as they emerged from the companion-way.

"Pleasant morning," he said blandly.

"Oh, my!" they answered, and rushed to the ship's railing.

After doing what we could for the sufferers we stopped outside the stone house and our first glance fell on an interesting object coming up the trail, in the shape of a man. It was the speed he was under that attracted our attention; such a rate of motion was unusual at an altitude of fourteen thousand feet, and we jumped to the conclusion that the sheriff was behind him with a bench warrant in the shape of a pistol. As he came nearer we saw that it was an Englishman in knickerbockers and a white helmet lined with green that had not kept his face from getting a furiously red tan. He carried a stout stick and tapped the stone house bases with it like a runner making a circuit of the base, and without a glance around he started down the mountain. I suppose his next base was Mt. St. Elias.

"What's your hurry, Mister?"

He deigned no reply but went down the mountain at a swinging gait.

"If you get there before we do," we shouted in chorus.

The presumption was certainly in his favor. I dare say the idiot belonged to some Alpine club or other. We wandered around over the top of the Peak, which is nothing but broken granite, some thirteen acres in extent. Back of the station we discovered a piled-up mound of stone. This commemorates one of the saddest tragedies that ever occurred in Pike's Peak region. For there lies buried a little girl, daughter of one Sergeant O'Keefe, who was in charge of the signal station during the seventies.

84 At the Foot of the Rockies.

One day he was obliged to go down to timber line after wood and left his child, who was but three years old, playing on the floor, and on his return he was horrified to find that she had been devoured by the large mountain rats. And now this simple grave stands as a lasting monument, not only to the sorrow of the grief-stricken father, but also to his veracity.

It was this same Sergeant O'Keefe who telegraphed the report East, that Pike's Peak had burst into a violent volcanic eruption, and that Colorado Springs, Manitou and the surrounding country were buried deeper than Pompeii ever was. Telegrams began coming from all parts of the country inquiring for relatives and friends, and several learned archeologists from the East immediately sharpened up their picks and started out to make excavations. Their discoveries were interesting and valuable and threw a flood of light on the civilization existing in the West at that time. They found a policeman faithfully asleep at his post near the corner of Tejon and Huerfano Streets, and also a college professor bending over a manuscript in which he was clearly demonstrating that Pike's Peak was not of volcanic origin and was incapable of volcanic action. He was in a beautiful state of preservation, being naturally hard and dry. A detective archeologist likewise made an important discovery, to-wit, of a group of men at the back door of a drug store (the Springs was a prohibition town) drinking something that was not tea. The government at Washington felt that the Sergeant should not be allowed to waste his imaginative abilities on the

desert air, and so they recalled him, and now I believe he is a reporter on "The Luminary" or "The Sphere," I am not sure which.

After examining the grave, we sat for a while on the west edge of the Peak drinking in the view in large draughts. So far as we could see there were mountains upon mountains; it seemed as if they must extend on and on until they would at last face the slow, rolling swells of the Pacific. From the hollows of the valleys rose the recurring ranges, like billows crested with snow, and above them clouds and sky shone in transcendent light; below us for thousands of feet swept the Peak's gigantic slopes broadening out into fields of rock or crumpling into ridges covered with dark forests of pine or seamed by chasms and cañons. Beyond, to the west, was the Wet Mountain Valley, and above it a long line of clouds in the luminous air; quiet islands of the blest they were, below the blue walls of heaven and above the silent sunny earth.

Still further west, beyond this valley, rose the Sangre de Cristo Range. This was the name, Sangre de Cristo, that sprang instinctively to the lips of the early Spanish explorers when they first saw that long and distant crest of snow, crimson in the light of evening, but now the red of sacrifice was gone and the whole range shone glistening in a purity of white. To the northeast was a mountain park guarded by a lofty peak, and beyond it rose a cumulous cloud of white with a foundation of radiant blue. But perchance you do not care for mountains, so let us cross

to the east front of the Peak and look across the inferior ranges below to the great plains stretching out under the sunshine. Some time ago one of our admirals stood on the summit of the Peak with feet well apart, bracing himself as it were on this immovable quarter-deck of the continent. After gazing at the plains for a while in silence, he turned to one of his party standing near.

"This," he said, "this reminds me of the Carribean Sea."

We descended the mountains that afternoon and camped at Jones' Park, a beautiful spot with a small stream running through its little meadows, and clumps of quaking aspens here and there. The next day we started home, and indeed it was about time, as our provisions were nearly gone, though our appetites remained in full force and effect. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon that our caravan debouched from Bear Creek Cañon onto the open plain. Our return to the region of civilization was welcomed by a large party of tourists who had spent the day in the cañon and were now homeward bound. How they did laugh when they saw us!

"Just look at those boys," said one, "ain't they a hard-looking lot?" I reckon we were: our clothes were torn, our shoes worn, while our faces were tanned to a brick red and our drooping sombreros scarcely concealed the radiance of our color. But Rarus was the gem of the party and was tastefully decorated with flowers and paper frills which Ed had designed (the frills, not the flowers, were of his designing), but

in spite of all these decorations he looked decidedly bored.

We began to feel leg-weary and the last four miles of our journey seemed to stretch out to unusual length. Ed was the only one who displayed any activity, and this was due entirely to external causes and not to buoyancy of spirit. You see he had torn his trousers quite badly behind, and we had pinned them up pending further repairs when he reached home, and ever and anon a pin would stick him. It was sundown when we got home and we were enthusiastically welcomed by the Scotch collie Ben, and by the assembled neighbors.

“Where’s your bears and mountain lions?” they inquired.

“They were too heavy to tote,” said Jim.

After a hot bath we enjoyed a square meal and read over the paper with the week’s news with great zest. The world had gone merrily on while we were exiled in the mountains. As we sat on the porch in the gloaming we decided that the best part of camping out was coming home.

SOME MILITARY EPISODES.

TOM was something of a military genius, and had enlisted a company made up of his personal friends, and, to fill in the required number, he had also drafted in some of the boys from the South End of town. Their uniform was simple, consisting of blue overalls with stripes of white cloth sewn down each leg, and gray flannel shirts. Tom was distinguished by a military cap and shoulder straps of black cloth, trimmed with yellow flannel, and two bars of the same stuff sewn across each end, and he also carried a real sword, the scabbard of which would get between his legs and trip him up; but that was nothing to be ashamed of, since greater soldiers than he had fallen in the same way.

On state occasions he was also adorned with a blue sash tied over his shoulders and under his arm. His first lieutenant, a swarthy complexioned Southern boy, very cool and reserved except on the subject of Jeff Davis, was armed with a short sword with a tin blade and a hilt of red leather wound with brass wire and a guard of brass. As for the rank and file, they were variously equipped; some had old Springfield rifles with rusty bayonets, others were armed with wooden guns, and a few had broom-handles which

they carried with martial precision, and the small Samivel, whose place was at the end of the line, carried a sawed-off shot-gun, the only piece of ordnance the company owned.

As for the commissariat, an important item, I may state frankly that there was no embalmed beef on the bill of fare, but more wholesome stuff in the shape of turnips, tomatoes and half-ripe watermelons from the garden, and an occasional round of cookies was dealt out in the rear of the kitchen by the colored cook, while the company stood at attention; there was no doubt about the attention, it was perfect. I think that the South End contingent would have mutinied under Tom's discipline if it had not been for those cookies.

This is merely by way of introduction. It happened one warm afternoon in September that Jim Case and I—both of us, by the way, had very little true military enthusiasm and belonged to the bushwhacker order of fighters—were lying in the shade of the barn, amusing ourselves by throwing pebbles at the hens or strutting gobblers who were within range, or taking occasional shots with our slings at the cows in the meadow below, when there came to our ears through the quiet air the sound of Tom's voice raised in military emphasis: "By the right flank, march!" Jim and I responded immediately, and looking between the fence boards, we saw his nondescript company maneuvering in the alfalfa field, which had been recently cut. They were just preparing to charge on a peaceful group of cows beneath a clump of cottonwoods.

The black bull had gotten up and was belligerently pawing the dirt and his massive head was threateningly lowered, which gave an interest to the proceedings which they might otherwise have lacked.

"Let's have some fun with his old company, Jim," I said.

"All right, but we'd better not tackle them in the field, because we'll get licked. They are one too many for us."

That one must have referred to Samivel with his shot-gun.

"We'll take 'em behind entrenchments," I said.

So we proceeded to gather ammunition of corn cobs, tomatoes and watermelon rinds, and placed them in an irrigating ditch that ran close to the garden fence. We also had a few rocks in our pockets in case of emergency. We knew that the company must pass our way on their way to their arsenal, which was in time of peace nothing but an old barn on my grandfather's place. It will be necessary to draw a diagram of the situation for the benefit of the military student. It is of great importance to note the position of the arsenal, alias a barn; the reason will appear later on.

We were now ready. Jim lay flat in the ditch, partially concealed by grass and weeds and with a piece of watermelon grasped convulsively in one hand and a tomato in the other; there was a fierce expression on his freckled face. I was a few feet from him, reconnoitering through the fence.

"You wait till I say ready, then let them have it," I said to Jim. I could see that the charge was over

and the company was reforming. "Here they come," I warned Jim, and threw myself flat down by the fence.

Soon I heard the thud of marching feet, and, lifting my head carefully, I could see the company advancing unconsciously to their doom. The light flashed from their rifles as they marched proudly on. "It was just before the battle, Mother," but they didn't know it.

If they had known it I do not think it would have affected their march in the least, but the uneven ground did interfere considerably with their marching, which under the most favorable circumstances was none of the best. The field was badly cut up by intersecting of the shallow irrigation ditches and in crossing of these the company was apt to be thrown badly out of alignment, very much to their commander's disgust which he did not hesitate to express.

Tom was marching ahead with great dignity, his eyes fixed on the distant range, and he was supported by his lieutenant, who was the grim incarnation of war, and he was a fighter too all right enough.

They were now fifty feet away and we could see the white stripes on their pants.

"Get ready," I whispered to Jim. "Fire!"

We jumped up and let them have it. We couldn't have missed them. The whole line was riddled and recoiled in confusion, the lieutenant was hit in the pit of the stomach and temporarily doubled up, while Sammie was making frantic efforts to get over the fence into the cow-pen.

"Come back here," yelled Tom sternly, "or I'll

have you shot. Fall back, fellers, to the next ditch. What you doing anyway, Bill? If you don't quit, I'll tell father."

"No you won't," I said, "because I'll tell him about your chasing those cows all around and you'll catch it all right. We are bushwhackers attacking your company.

Tom then retreated and held a council of war for a minute; then he turned toward us.

"Fall in, attention, fix bayonets!" "We'll fix you," yelled Jim derisively. "Forward, march!"

They were now in range.

"Charge!" and they started on the run.

"Shoot th officers," yelled Jim to me.

This we certainly did. Tom got it in the eye with a cob, while his lieutenant was bespattered with gory green tomato, and the missiles that missed the officers struck the men behind them. But they were too many for us, and in a moment they were swarming over the fence. The lieutenant was lunging fiercely at Jim with his finely tempered Damascus blade; in fact, it was better tempered than he was. But Jim got hold of it and pulled it away from the gallant officer. We were almost surrounded, and if captured we knew that we would be tortured.

"Come on, Bill," yelled Jim, and knocking over two of the soldiers in his way, he ran along the fence and scrambled over, and I was at his heels. Tom and Lieutenant Jones saw what we were after and they came across the alfalfa field to head us off; and it looked as if they would surely do it. I got through

the fence marked "A" in the diagram, but Jim was a second late and the lieutenant grasped him by one leg and began pulling it with energy.

It was a critical moment. The whole squad were almost on us. Seizing the sword from Jim, I struck the lieutenant on the wrist, and he loosed his grip for a moment and Jim wrested himself loose. Then we made for the door of the arsenal. (See diagram.) The enemy were converging on us from all sides. We barely had time to slam the door and fasten it on the inside before they were tugging at it. We threw ourselves down on the straw, gasping but rejoicing at our narrow escape. Outside we could hear the soldiers prowling around, trying to find some way to get in, but the windows and the other door were barred with boards, as the barn had not been in use for a long time. Now and then a face would peer in at the window, but the panes were so dusty and cobwebby that they couldn't make anything out.

They gathered at the corner of the barn and discussed ways and means of breaking in or storming our castle. It was a galling thing for them to have the bushwhackers in their sacred arsenal and they were evidently not going to spare any expense in dislodging us. We heard little Samivel's shrill voice as he contributed his mite to the general council.

"Say, Captain," he said, addressing Tom, "my pa is a miner and has got some giant powder at home, and I'll get a stick and we'll blow'em sky-high."

I fear Samivel's imagination had been fired by reading explosive dime novels.

"All right for you, Sammie," yelled Jim, "we'll give you a good licking for that."

Some favored the scheme, especially Lieutenant Jones, but it was finally rejected. We got our breath by this time and began to look around for weapons of offense. I discovered a big green squash under the straw and Jim cut it up into small chunks, which were heavier and more effective than watermelon rinds. Then we went up-stairs on tiptoe to the loft so as not to alarm the foe, and put our ammunition together on the floor just beneath the square opening where the hay was thrown in.

When everything was ready, we looked cautiously out. It couldn't have been better; there was the unsuspecting foe just below us, most of them sitting on the ground with their backs against the barn. Jim picked out that small dynamiter, Samivel, who was standing in the foreground with his back towards us, going through the manual of arms with a wooden gun. I selected a big South Ender with a slouch hat, who was just below the window whittling a stick.

"One, two, throw!" yelled Jim.

"Ouch!" yelled Sammie as the chunk hit him square in the back; at the same time he jumped about three feet into the air.

My victim's remark was still more emphatic as my piece of squash struck him square on the top of the head. I think he said, "Oh my!" at least we will presume that he did. There was a scattering in all directions, some getting behind the wood pile and the others taking refuge around the barn.

"You're great soldiers," jeered Jim, "running off and leaving your guns as soon as you're attacketted."

Indeed, it looked like a stricken field with the weapons strewn around on the ground. Just then a stone whistled past our heads and, slamming against a cross-beam back of us, fell to the floor. Then came a volley from the force who had taken possession of the wood pile. It was easy for the enemy to keep out of range of our lighter missiles. Of course we returned the stone with interest, but our aim had to be so instantaneous that it was not effective; as soon as one of our heads appeared above the surface, rocks would come thick and fast and we had to keep below most of the time.

"Get me a pitchfork," commanded Jim.

"What for?" I asked.

"I'll show you."

He stuck his handkerchief on one of the tines and waved it out of the window.

"Cease firing," commanded Tom. "You fellers want to surrender?" he inquired as our faces appeared in the window.

"Not much; we want you fellers to quit firing rocks; there is some furniture stored up here in this loft and you have already broken two mirrors."

Now this was not the truth; it was simply diplomacy.

"You're a liar," yelled a big fellow from the South End.

"You're another and dassent come up here and

back it," retorted Jim and hurled a rock at the offender; and the battle commenced again.

Just then we heard a suspicious noise down-stairs and hastened down to see what was up. We discovered Lieutenant Jones and a corporal crawling along under the floor, intent on reaching the uncovered space where the stalls were and capturing us. It was hard work for them, as there was only a few inches between the joists and the ground; and as soon as they saw that they were discovered, they tried to back out. But it wasn't so easy and we made it extremely interesting for them, jumping up and down on the floor over their heads and sticking them with the pitchfork.

"Quit that, you fellers. Doggon you, we'll lick you when we get a t."

Then we would jump up and down on the floor and drown their maledictions; and when they finally crawled out they were a hard-looking pair, covered with dirt, and with chicken feathers sticking in their hair. We stayed down below to prevent any further undermining; and then we heard something thumping against the side of the barn. The besiegers were certainly giving us trouble. We rushed up into the loft and looked out, and they were just putting up a scaling ladder under the window some three feet below the sill. It was held from slipping by two gallant soldiers. Tom went up first. We had no Greek fire to throw down on him, but we discovered something better, it was a bucketful of bran.

As Tom raised himself to catch the lower edge of the opening, we suddenly threw it all over him; his

hair and clothes grew white in a single second, and the flakes got into his eyes, blinding him, and he almost fell down the ladder. In the confusion which resulted, Jim got the pitchfork and cast the ladder off, and down it fell, scraping along the side of the barn and almost crushing two of Tom's veterans; and they didn't try to raise the ladder again. Tom was led away from the field by the lieutenant, and the honors of the day seemed to rest with Jim and me.

But though Tom's natural vision was blighted, his eagle mind was still clear and active. Seeing he could not overthrow us by assault, he tried stratagem in getting even with us. In a short time we heard a commotion behind the barn, but could not make out what was going on. In a few minutes we heard something roll against the door. Looking out we discovered that a big rock had been placed against it and our only means of exit was closed; we were blocked in.

"Now you fellers can stay in there till we let you out. We're going swimming. Company, fall in, attention, shoulder arms, march!"

"All right," I yelled, "you'll have to milk the cows anyway to-night."

This threat did not seem to worry Tom, and he and his company marched gaily away. After making desperate efforts to pry the door open, we had to give it up; but we didn't wish to spend the rest of our Saturday afternoon in calm meditation on our fate.

"Get a rope," said Jim.

"What for?" I asked.

"You'll see."

We rummaged all around and at last found a rope back of a trunk in the loft. Jim climbed up on a cross-beam and tied one end of the rope around it and the other end he threw out of the window. It came within ten feet of the ground, and we slid down, blistering our hands, and in a second we were on *terra firma* again. We immediately started off in search of Tom and his company. We could hear their loud shouts, as we crawled through the thick willows, and the merry splashing of water; but the avenger was on their trail. We waited until they began to dress and then rushed out and threw sand over them. They were not in a condition to follow us far, so Jim and I made our escape and spent the rest of the afternoon trying to drown out some prairie dogs. Tom had a full bill of complaints to file that evening, and for one I don't blame him.

A week later Tom and this same company went into camp in the back pasture in a grove of cottonwoods. They had two "A" tents rigged up under the protection of the trees. Jim and I sauntered out before supper to make a friendly call on Tom and his company, and we had in our minds a scheme of campaign fully laid out for that night. We wished to get our bearings; we were spies in disguise and should have been shot, and to tell the truth that was what came near happening to us as will appear later on. As we approached the confines of the camp we were stopped by a sentry, who was passing to and fro with a heavy Springfield on his shoulder.

"Halt, who goes there?"

"Friends," said Jim.

This was a lie.

"Advance, friend, and give the countersign."

"Don't know your old countersign," said Jim, "let us through."

But the sentry kept poking his bayonet at our vitals and it became necessary to use diplomacy.

"We've got some cubebs in our pockets for the boys," I said.

We gave him one, and as he was lighting it, we got past him and proceeded to make friends with our old enemies. Some were lying around in the shade of the trees smoking dry and crooked pieces of driftwood which generally left a very acrid taste in the mouth. Others had corn silk rolled into cigarettes at which they were puffing with much abandon and enjoyment. And one of the boys from the South End of town was smoking a live cigarette, and he sat with half-closed eyes puffing the smoke into rings and looking as tough as you please. This boy is now serving a term in the "Pen." Strange coincidence, isn't it?

"Helloo, Sammie, what's the matter with your legs? They look swelled," inquired Jim, as the lad came waddling toward us.

"He's got on three pairs of pants," explained the lieutenant, "so he won't get cold at night."

He certainly looked comical and Jim could not resist the temptation to kick him for the purpose of testing his protective armor. Sammie tried to retaliate, but was so decidedly hampered that at every effort he

tumbled over on the ground. We thought it was the proper thing to pay our respects to the commanding officer. He was in his tent, the one marked by a small flag nailed to the front pole. We lifted the flap and went in, and found Tom seated on a box writing on another one turned up on end before him. He had on my father's belt with the letters "U. S." on the brass plate. He was frowning grimly as he wrote out an order.

"Captain," we said, saluting ceremoniously, "we have come to take supper with you."

"You fellers can take your supper at home. You don't belong to this company and you don't drill, and I ain't going to have you snooping around here for grub."

There was much reason in this view, but I parleyed further with the captain, while Jim helped himself liberally from a box of soda crackers that had been opened.

It was very hot in the tent and the black flies were buzzing around, so we thought it would be pleasanter outside, and accordingly we went out to cheer up Lieut. Jones, who was directing the boys as they dragged brush and wood to the front of the tents for the big camp fire that they were going to have that night.

Some of the soldiers were kicking vigorously because certain of their comrades were lounging and smoking instead of helping.

"Let's see your sword, George," I requested, as we came up to the lieutenant.

"Ain't it a 'beaut'? it's one of those tempered blades that you can bend back and forth."

I tried it, but the sword didn't bend back but stayed in the shape of a cimeter.

"You darned fool, what you do that for?"

"Oh, you put it in the fire, George," I said, "and it will bend back all right."

"Here, don't you let that coffee boil over," shouted the lieutenant to the corporal, who was holding the black coffee pot on a forked stick over the fire.

It was now getting towards evening and the sun was sifting its yellow light through the leaves of the cottonwoods, and from the near-by fence post a meadow lark was trilling its notes out into the clear air. The boys began to gather in for grub. Then the sentry began to grumble.

"It's somebody else's turn now," he said, and Sammie was detailed to take his beat. It became cool as soon as the sun went down and the bonfire was lit, and we gathered around it, some lying on the ground, others sitting on cracker boxes. It was now time to throw out a few dark hints to help our deep-laid plot.

"I wouldn't be in you fellers' shoes for a good deal," said Jim.

"Why?" asked Samivel.

"Oh, 'cause."

"He's just trying to scare you," remarked Tom.

"No, I ain't. There's lots of tramps go through here for a short cut to Fountain, and they killed a

man down there last week. They shot him as he sat by the winder."

"Yes, and they found a man killed out on the plain last week," I joined in; "his head was split open and they thought the tramps did it."

"I think there's wildcats in these trees," Jim continued, "I heard 'em fighting last night. They drop on your heads when you ain't looking and claw you all to pieces."

"They ain't nothing but tame cats," said Lieut. Jones, "and we ain't afraid of cats or tramps either."

But the company drew in closer to the circle of the firelight, which was leaping with its red tongues into the night, and they would glance apprehensively at the shadows that were wavering back of them; and Samivel looked pale back of his freckles.

"Let's be getting home, Jim," I said, "I think there's going to be a flood. Its awful black over Austin's Bluffs; you can see it lightning now. There's going to be a water-spout and the creek will come up and drown you fellers out."

"Let's go and sleep in the barn," said one of the group.

"Anybody that's afraid can go," said Tom.

Nobody moved, and we left them to their fate, in which we intended to have a hand.

At the gate Jim and I separated. We were both hungry and wanted to get something to eat before starting out on our expedition. It was not very long before I heard a low whistle outside, and, seizing my hat, made for the door.

"Where are you going, Bill?" demanded my father.

"Just to see Jim for a little while," I said.

"Have you your lessons for Monday?" he inquired.

"Yes, except my arithmetic, and I have got an hour before recess to get that in."

How many unprepared lessons had gone over to that hour before recess!

"Don't be out late," cautioned my mother.

"No, ma'am, I won't," and away I rushed, glad to have escaped so easily.

Jim was waiting outside the gate. It was extremely dark, with black clouds overhead and occasional flashes of lightning through the gloomy night. The mystery of the night, the wind stirring in the tops of the big cottonwoods, made us thrill with excitement; and I dare say Jim does not feel half so interested in a charge against the Filipinos as he did that night when we stole through the pasture to attack Company "A" of the First Colorado Volunteers.

Stealthily as Apache Indians we approached the grove. The sentry was passing up and down quite close to the tents. We could see him as he passed the smoldering fire.

Just then Jim exclaimed: "Ouch, I've got into a cactus bed."

"Halt!" yelled the sentry.

We threw ourselves flat on the ground; the idiot was going to fire. He brought his rifle to his shoul-

der quick as a flash and a bullet went whistling through the darkness. Out the boys rushed from their tents.

"What's the matter?"

"I heard some one out there," said the sentry, "and I think I killed him, I heard him yell."

Cautiously Tom and two or three others ventured out into the darkness. Meanwhile we had crawled around under the shelter of some chokecherry bushes, as we did not want to be in range of a volley. We could see their figures indistinctly as they moved out in skirmish line, and we threw some small stones in their direction.

"What's that? Something hit me on the chest," exclaimed Lieut. Jones.

"Me too," said another voice.

"Let's go back; I think it's hailing, it's so black."

This they did.

"I guess it was nothing but a cow you heard," remarked Tom to the sentry.

"Joe Dillen will take your beat now."

When everything had become quiet again we made a detour and came in back of the camp. The new sentry was evidently on the alert and he stopped every few steps and in a crouching attitude would peer into the darkness, as if he were going to spring on some unseen foe. A cottonwood stick cracked under my foot and he challenged but didn't fire. We got up close to the rear wall of Tom's tent and Jim groaned.

"What's that?" exclaimed an excited voice.

"Nothing but George snoring," remarked the captain.

"I wasn't either," retorted a sleepy voice against the tent wall.

A long silence, and then the two bushwackers groaned together.

"I heard something that time sure," said the captain; "sentry go round and see what's back there."

"Not much, I think them's tramps."

Just then Jim punched a body lying against the tent side. Then there was wild commotion.

"Squad No. 1, turn out!"

"What is it?" arose a babble of voices.

"Tramps or wildcats? Oh, we'll cut their hearts out," some exclaimed ferociously.

This was to strike terror into the concealed tramps. Then a detail came out with Tom carrying a lantern. It behooved Jim and I to do something; it wouldn't be any joke for us if they caught us, you'd better believe. There were two trees overhanging the separate tents. Jim scrambled into one and I into the other. We had just time to get into the protection of the lower branches. We could look right down as they passed under the trees where we were, the lantern cutting swaths into the darkness, and we could see their tousled heads, and their eyes looking wildly excited. But they found nothing and turned in again, except two or three who sat up to keep the fire company, the night being too full of alarms to think of more sleep.

As for Jim and myself, it looked as if we were des-

tined to roost in those trees for the rest of the night; for, if we started to climb down, the watchers by the fire would see us and our capture would be certain. And worst of all, I could not communicate with my fellow conspirator. Everything had quieted and I was trying to find a more comfortable and less cramped place than the crutch between two branches, when I heard an awful racket in Jim's tree. "Yeou! yeou!! s—s—sps—ki—yeou!!!!" Then with a mighty crash Jim came through the branches down on the slope of the tent. I thought it was one of his daring maneuvers; so I dropped on the other tent, catching the ridgepole with both hands.

This last catastrophe was too much for the overstrained nerves of Company A, and they went flying across the pasture, the lantern swinging wildly in the van like a bow-light in a heavy sea; and Samivel was roaring, "Don't kill me, don't kill me," taking long strides, as if he had on three pairs of seven-league pants.

Jim and I weren't far behind, for we were scared too, because there really were some cats in a neighboring tree and Jim had taken his tumble to avoid them. The gallant warriors soon reached the barn, and tearing open the sliding doors, they rushed inside, causing the horses to jump up with a tremendous racket. The boys climbed up into the loft and slept on the hay the rest of the night. Jim and I felt we had been repaid for our exertions; but the next day we had to spend several pleasant and profitable hours picking the cactus out of our knees.

THE STORY OF THE DIMINUTIVE PINE.

HE was a very little fellow indeed, only about a foot and a half high in his bare roots, but perfectly formed, with small branches and tiny green needles. But how tremendous everything was around him! He stood on that ridge of Cheyenne Mountain which starts from the bend of the Cripple Creek road and rises gradually till it reaches the pinnacle of the Eagle Rock. Towards the northeast the small Pine could see that great lonely fellow, The Peak, with a white cape thrown partially over his huge rocky shoulders.

This mountain was regarded with awe by all the pines that grew on the range, and none, not even the most adventurous, dared to approach within several thousand feet of his summit. The little Pine thought he must be rather lonely away up there, with his head against the sky, where he could not hear the low intoning of the trees, nor the laughter of the little mountain streams. Then, too, the storms always seemed to strike him first, and his white hair would be blown all about his head by the force of the terrific winds.

Just south of The Peak, and nearer to Cheyenne, rose Old Baldy. For this splendid mountain the diminutive Pine felt a deep reverence, which was

shared by all the members of his tribe. He would say impudent things to the other mountains (he belonged to the American branch of his race), but never to Old Baldy. It is quite true that the mountains seemed in no wise disturbed by his remarks, but he enjoyed saying them just the same. This mountain with his noble, rounding heights might well have been the judge and lawgiver for all his brethren throughout the Colorado ranges from Long's Peak in the north to the Spanish Peaks in the south and Uncompahgre on the western border; for among them all none approached him in dignity and sublimity. In the summer time the cloud shadows moved in stately succession over his dome, and the small Pine was accustomed to watch them as they glided down from crest to slope, from slope to the deep cañon at the mountain's base, then out past the rocky barriers to the great plains beyond.

It was there that he lost sight of them, for he was not yet tall enough to look over the ridge of the mountain onto the plains below. They were his undiscovered country, and his taller brothers and sisters used to arouse his curiosity by relating the wonderful things they could see but which were hidden from his infant gaze. His mother told him to be patient and he would soon grow tall enough to see the plains for himself, but it seemed a long time to wait. But he had this consolation—he could see further out than any other pine of his own age. It happened this way.

There was a huge granite boulder which had been split in twain as neatly as though the God of the

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Mountain had divided it with one stroke of his sharp sword. One half had rolled down the slope quite a ways, but the other remained near the top of the ridge. About a third of the way up the smooth side of the boulder and ten feet from the ground was a little pocket filled with dirt and loose gravel. The little Pine's mother had set him in this pocket and stood just below to catch him in case he should fall. But he held on sturdily with his small roots, proud of the prominence his rock gave him. All the members of his tribe regarded him with pride and gloomy approbation and with occasional shakings of their somber heads.

Certain traditions of his people were early instilled into his small soul. In the first place, there was no mountain in the whole range which equaled Cheyenne. The clans of Mt. Rosa, Old Baldy and Mt. Garfield were distinctly inferior to their own. There was no denying that some of the mountains rose to greater heights and wore their crowns of snow much longer; but their own mountain was of far greater length, with three distinct summits of equal height. Then, too, it held the very front position in the battalion of the range, with no intervening foothills, so that the plains swept to its very feet.

Cheyenne also sent his pines scouting far out on the lonely plains, sometimes in detachments, sometimes there were only two or three together, while there was one dark giant who stood far out on a distant bluff overlooking the Fountain que Bouille and scanning the wide stretch of plains. All this gave

their clan a warlike distinction of which they were naturally proud. It was in the fall that their mountain had a peculiar glory of its own; when the trailing vines and quaking aspens had turned to scarlet and yellow, and the great crater was filled with brilliant colors, and every summit had its touch of gold and flame.

Another tradition which was taught the infant Pine and which he seemed to have almost by instinct, was to despise these quaking aspens whose smooth, light skins were so different from his own rough bark. They were such poor, nervous things that the faintest breeze of summer would send their leaves dancing and quivering, turning from green to gray and gray to green again, while the first light frost would give them a hectic red or malarial yellow. But it was a very strong wind indeed that was able to make the little Pine budge, and in the winter he bore the heavy fall of snow on his small branches very bravely and remained green and hale through it all. However, his people, being such a strong and healthy folk, forgot that the beauty of their mountain was due to this frail appearing tree which they so much despised.

But there was another family of trees which the pines could not look down upon, namely, the silver spruce. These beautiful trees of aristocratic pretensions claimed that the silver which tipped their boughs came from the veins of ore hidden in the mountain, which gave them their coloring and exalted rank. Perhaps this pretension might find a

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counterpart in human society, but I pause, not desiring to introduce anything into this simple narrative which would hurt any one's feelings. The pines naturally hated the proud and handsome spruce, and the small Pine used to hear his brothers humming to themselves, "The plain American pine is good enough for me," which sentiment seemed to give them much comfort, especially if any of the spruce trees were near enough to hear it.

The little Pine did not have a quiet, sheltered existence. Things were apt to happen on that mountain summit in the shape of fierce winds, thunder-storms and blizzards. He never forgot his first thunder-storm. It was a sultry day in the first part of August. The face of his rock, on which the mica glistened like drops of perspiration, grew so hot that it seemed as if his needles were going to be scorched. He was very glad when in the early half of the afternoon he saw the clouds coming in from the plain, where they had been loitering and massing themselves behind the Peak. His father growled to him that there was going to be trouble and that he was to hold on tight and not be frightened.

In a short time the clouds consolidated into a dark, blue surface, which grew darker and darker. Slowly it moved until it extended back of the whole range; against the somber gloom stood Mt. Rosa in sharp high outlines, Old Baldy with his rounding summits, and The Peak's vast bulk. Little gray messengers of clouds were riding swiftly on the winds from battalion to battalion of the storm. The shadow now

covered Cheyenne and was slowly eating up the sunshine on the plain below. The air was hot and very still. Everything was now ready and the little Pine braced himself for what was to come.

There was a moment of suspense, then the dark surface of the cloud behind The Peak was divided with a zigzag of fire, and then came the roar of the opening thunder. From back of Baldy and Mt. Rosa came quick successive flashes and the air was filled with reverberation upon reverberation. A damp breeze came to herald the approach of the advancing storm and large drops of rain began to fall, spattering on the graveled shoulder of the mountain. Then the wind rose and the rain quickened with a rush and a sweeping roar. It seemed to the small Pine as if the lightning was looking especially for him, but he held on sturdily though almost suffocated by the downpour of rain. Then there was a blue-white flash of dazzling light and a crash that seemed to rend the mountain apart.

When the small Pine came to himself, he found he was still safe on the side of the rock and that the storm had swept on. The trees were still dripping and breathless after the tussle with wind and rain, and a few had their limbs broken, while down the slope a ways stood an old giant who had received a cruel wound from the lightning. It began at his head and ran around his body in a deep gash which left his heart bare; but such was the vitality of the old fellow that he survived, though the scar of his

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wound always remained. The storm had now drifted on until its dark mass was banked against the eastern horizon; but the western sky was calm and beautiful, with its delicate tinge of green; while the thin edge of the storm cloud was changed from an iridescent radiance to a yellow splendor in the evening sun. The small Pine felt much elated after his first storm, the air seemed so cool and refreshing, and the silver drops on the ends of his green needles were pierced with gold by the rays of the level sun.

He was yet to go through a worse experience than a thunder-storm. It occurred one morning in the late fall. He woke up, as was his custom, at the same time as did his friend the sun, for whom he had a great liking, since he always drove away the cold mists and clouds that were scattered along the range. And besides, he always seemed to have such a cheerful and wholesome disposition. But this particular morning he did not have his usual pleasant expression and his face was an angry red and streaked with black lines; and as the day advanced, he did not seem to brighten perceptibly. The air, too, seemed different; it had an acridness which almost choked our small friend. He did not know what these changes meant, but the older members of his tribe did and they looked very much worried.

Before night he realized that they were in the path of a dreaded mountain fire. He had heard stories of these devastations which had killed so many of his people, and indeed he could see down the slope the charred and naked bodies of those that had fallen in

previous fires. By and by the smoke began rolling over the ridge of the mountain in dense cloud masses, and the small pine could hardly breathe, and he closed his eyes and held to his place, while the rock grew so hot that it scorched his needles cruelly. But he did not stir. Soon the dark smoke was starred with sparks and burning embers, and then came a swift arm of flame and caught a tall and stately pine standing upon the ridge. With a hissing and a roar the column of flame rose and a glare shone through the dun smoke. The little Pine opened his eyes, and he never forgot that scene. Just then a merciful wind swept the fire to the south and the small Pine and his people on the western slope of the mountain were spared.

However, all the events of his small life were not so tragical. It chanced one day in the following summer that a small party of tourists (the pines were accustomed to call them "tenderfeet"), consisting of an elderly gentleman, two middle-aged ladies and a young girl, came struggling up the mountain and threw themselves down panting and exhausted in the shadow of the big boulder.

"Oh, this awful mountain! I am almost dead!" exclaimed the stoutest of the two ladies, and fell back against the rock. The gentleman began fanning her with his straw hat, but without much apparent solicitude: he was her husband.

"Oh, do come, Maria," exclaimed the other, who was flushed but enthusiastic, "and look at the view over the plains; it is perfectly glorious."

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"I am not going to move from here till I get my breath, if I ever do," and she began to gasp alarmingly.

The gentleman evidently thought it was time for a diversion. "Do you know climbing this mountain reminds me of a conundrum?"

"Oh, George," exclaimed the stout lady, "how can you be so cruel? Have I not suffered enough without having your old conundrums thrown at my head?"

"What is it, papa?" asked the young girl, who had been flitting about with entire indifference to the altitude.

"What is the difference between a chicken with a topknot and climbing this mountain?"

"Give it up," they exclaimed with marked unanimity.

"One is topknot and the other is top-nit!"

"Oh!" they groaned in chorus.

"I think the altitude has stimulated your brain, has it not?" said the lady; "that is not quite as bad as your average."

"What fools these mortals be," said an old pine standing near.

Just then the young girl caught sight of the diminutive Pine and danced up to where he stood. "Oh, you dear little thing! Look, mama, is he not too cute for anything, perched up there all by his lonesome?"

The small Pine was much embarrassed, but maintained a sturdy reticence, though this young girl, in a

blue shirt waist with her fair flushed face shaded by a straw hat, was entirely beyond the range of his experience. She reached one small hand to touch him, and then drew it quickly back; on the tip of her finger was a tiny drop of crimson.

"You mean little thing," she exclaimed.

The small Pine was much perplexed. It was her own fault; she might have known those green needles were sharp. After a while she came back with a red mountain flower and placed it among his small branches.

"Now will you be good?" she said.

Every summer the little Pine looked for their return, but they didn't come again. At last there came the great crisis in the life of the little mountain Pine. He had been growing very fast of late, and it wouldn't be long before the ridge would cease to hide from his view his undiscovered country. One morning he woke up very suddenly, and way down below him were the plains spread out in the morning light. After his first astonishment had passed, he felt disappointed. It wasn't so very wonderful after all, nothing like he had dreamt it would be. Indeed, they seemed to be made of the same sort of dirt that composed the mountains. Then he became interested and began asking numerous questions of his immediate relatives. During the whole day he was busy taking possession of his new country. He could see the town laid out in green squares, the winding streams, the blue ponds of water, and on and beyond and in ever widening circles, the great plains. Then

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at night the lights flashed out above the town, and the small Pine watched these new stars below, while above him in the night shone the eternal stars over the silent ranges.

ON THE PLAINS.

OUR buckboard was running smoothly along on a prairie road, which is different from any other kind and goes in parallel lines, but as I am not much of an artist perhaps it will be just as well for me not to attempt to make a drawing of the road, for in my school-days, happily now far remote, parallel lines were entirely beyond the scope of my talent. Later I discovered that those kind of lines never meet, and indeed there seemed to be no end to the road that might be compared perhaps to a streak of fat and a streak of lean. There may be eight or ten of these bands separated by the shallow ruts, and some of these latter are often washed into gullies by the summer rains, and like bands of narrow ribbons the road is seen stretching on across leagues of level plains, and like penciled lines it is traced on the distant rise below the east horizon. There was some of the same old crowd in the buckboard, namely, Tom, Jim Case, Ed Deven and I. We had left the home ranch, which was thirty-five miles northeast of Colorado Springs, on the south slope of the Divide, at eight o'clock and were *en route* to the log camp thirteen miles distant on the other side of the Divide, which was to be the base of our hunting operations. That morning Jim held the

ribbons and the rest of us instinctively assumed the position of critics.

"Oh," groaned Ed, "I knew he would hit that rock. Takes a good driver to strike every stone in the road."

Then Jim hit the horses a sudden clip with his blacksnake, and the feet of the critics went up in the air and their sombreros fell off back of the buckboard.

"Whoa!" we yelled, but Jim pretended to ignore the situation and we had to grab the reins and bring the horses to a stop; and then we ran back after our hats.

As soon as we were under way again, Tom remarked: "Just look how he is making those horses sweat."

This criticism stung Jim, who prided himself on knowing how to handle horses.

"If you don't like my driving, you can lump it," he said surlily.

We had now crossed the headwaters, I mean the head-sands, of the Big Sandy; and leaving the main traveled road, we jounced along over the curly buffalo grass that covered the plains. I wish I could give you some idea of the wonderful country that lay around us. Along the western horizon rose the battlements of the great range with Pike's Peak dominating the center. At that distance of forty miles the foothills no longer obscured our view of him, for they lay in crumpled masses round his feet, while in naked grandeur he rose against the blue.

Across leagues and leagues of sunny plains, a full one hundred miles to the south, stood the twin Spanish Peaks, blue, mysterious, impalpable, in the far-off haze, guarding a land of strange romance, where floated summer palaces of clouds on the borders of a realm of which the old time poets dreamt and sung.

As for the plains themselves, how difficult it is to express their charm! They have not the grandeur of the mountains nor the lone solemnity of the central seas; but there is a mystery in those far horizons and a sense of human beauty in the fertile rolling land, with its summer covering of wild flowers and grasses bending beneath the roving winds that seemed utterly free in the immensity of sky, plain and far spreading sunshine. Then come the clouds in the warm afternoons, and to the sky they give the presence of their white beauty, and to the earth beneath their gliding shadows.

We were now jolting up the slope towards the Divide. This is one of the most interesting regions in Colorado. It runs at right angles to the range and extends fifty miles east, and in breadth it is from fifteen to twenty miles. From a distance it looks like a long dark ridge, but is in fact an elevated plateau covered with pines and of great diversity of formation, with little parks, like green jewels in a setting of yellow bluffs, and here and there are isolated peaks and great mesas, mostly rectangular in shape, with precipitous sides of sandstone, and their tops covered with a thin layer of soil and grass, like frosting on a pound cake.

This Divide country used to be in early days the stamping ground for the Cheyenne Indians and other tribes, and there are numerous Indian relics to be found in this country; and if we do not run into some Indian stories in the course of this accurate narrative, I shall be much disappointed. There are also many fine specimens of agatized and petrified woods and geodes, which are a kind of geological fruit with a gravelly rind, which, broken open, reveals a luscious jeweled interior.

In a short time we had crossed the Divide and were bumping down the northeast slope and we soon reached the log camp which lay in a long, shallow depression, and to the east were the plains marked by a solitary guard of pine trees some miles out on the slope of a rise, and in all other directions lay the broken country of the Divide. We put our horses into the corral back of the log cabin and placed a stone against the gate to keep it from sagging open.

The cabin had one room with an old bunk in one corner, and in the middle of the floor was a small, sheet-iron, camp stove, much rusted, and also a chair constructed of greasy boards; these articles filled out the inventory of the furniture. It wasn't luxurious but it would do. At a short distance from the house were piles of fresh sawn lumber, and near them were deep sawdust heaps where the mill had once stood. Our water supply, an item of great importance on the plains, was in a barrel sunk into the ground back of the house. The water was clear and cold, but strong with alkali, as our chapped lips soon testified. Alto-

gether the log camp was a luxurious place to camp in, for we had water, shelter and firewood.

We spent the afternoon making ourselves at home in our new surroundings. It did not take us long to unload the buckboard and spread the blankets out on the floor. Ed was assigned the bunk, as he was apt to kick in his sleep. After these arrangements were completed, the stove was cleaned out and made ready for action. Then we roamed over the lumber piles, trying to get a shot at the gray squirrels that made their homes underneath them or in the planes between the layers of boards. When evening came, Tom and Ed got the supper, this being their particular assignment; while Jim and I watered and fed the horses. We thought ourselves very smart in making this division of the work, for each of us was good for ten batter-cakes apiece, and the horses were not much bother, at least we thought so, but before our camping trip was over we had reason to change our minds. We sat on the bunk and watched the two cooks as they struggled with the menu and the stove.

"This blamed thing won't draw," complained Ed, walking around the stove and viewing it with anxiety from every angle.

"You haven't got the damper turned right," I said and started to rectify the error.

"You leave that alone, we're doing this," said Tom, sharply.

"All right," I replied, "but I want you to cook those eggs hard or we'll fire you."

"That's straight," chimed in Jim; "what do we pay you for anyway?"

"Will you fellows get out of here," said Tom, "and let us cook?"

"Say please," I said, tantalizingly. But we thought that perhaps we had done enough and not wishing to exasperate the cooks into striking, we sauntered outside. In a little while we heard a voice.

"Last call for dinner in the dining-car."

We walked in and took our places without a moment's hesitation, and I glanced over the menu, which was as follows:

Water (Extra Alkali).
Boston Baked Beans and Brown Bread.
Relishes—Good Appetite.
Potatoes à la "skins on."

DESSERT.

Desert Pancakes and Black Strap.
Real Black Coffee in Tin Cups.
Toasts (Quail on).
The Girls!
The Antelope!
Ourselves!

Ah, those pancakes! We shall never forget them, never! They were in size like the full round moon, just as flat and yellow, and here and there were soft spots in their texture.

"Haven't you fellers got enough, yet?" exclaimed Ed, in despair.

"Just getting started," said Jim.

There threatened to be a strike, but boys' agreements are similar to those of the Medes and Persians, and we would have considered Ed and Tom as eternally disgraced if they had gone back on their contract; and to do them justice, they stuck manfully to their batter-cakes and the batter-cakes to the frying-pan.

After supper was finished we left the two cooks to wash up the dishes, while we climbed on top of the highest timber pile and sat with our feet dangling over, facing the gorgeous sunset, "which was panting red pants into the west," as a modern poet hath it. We practised shooting with Jim's revolver at a large oil can that lay on the ground some distance off. It was quite untouched when we finished our practise.

"Hello, what's Ed up to over there?" said Jim.

He was sitting on a petrified log some distance east of the cabin and was busily drawing something. Every once in a while he would cast a calculating look at the cabin.

"He's drawing pictures," I said in surprised tones, for this was a side of Ed's nature that we were not on to. We went over to investigate immediately. Ed seemed very fidgetty as we bent over his shoulder and scanned his work. The cabin he was drawing was quit realistic in treatment, but there was an old frontiersman standing in the door, with a flowing beard and broad sombrero that gave the sketch an idealistic element.

"Perspective ain't good," I said after a careful survey of the drawing.

"And he ain't got that door in straight," said Jim, who was strong on practical details.

"You fellows get out," said Ed, half laughing and half mad.

"Put me in too," said Jim, planting himself squarely before the artist. Then Ed kicked at him and Jim got him by the foot and I found it necessary to drag the offender away in the interests of peace.

Then we went over to join Tom, who was searching along the slope for Indian arrowheads. I took for my territory a shallow gully and left the rest of the country to Jim and Tom. Once Tom crossed my reservation, but wandered further on when I objected to his trespassing. I went along carefully scanning every inch of the adobe earth for arrowheads. But soon the twilight deepened, and I was about to give up the search and said to myself, "If I don't find any before I reach those rocks, I will quit." It was a vow and I had to keep it; so I began as a last resort to turn over the rocks and kick around the loose gravel that had been washed down through the gully, when my eye caught sight of a stone of peculiar shape.

At last I had found it, and if it had been a glittering diamond, I could not have been more elated. Somehow it gave me a feeling that the Indians were not of the past and that the blue smoke might even then be rising from their tepees on the shadowy plains. Yes, and there were two Hostiles moving slowly along

on the east ridge, outlined against the eastern sky! But no, it was just Tom and Jim. I went to meet them, anxious to find out if they had got anything. I showed them my specimen, which was not a perfect one; it was a drab stone and the tip was broken.

Tom had found a whole one, made of flint, with a reddish tinge, and there were marks that made little ripples on its surface where it had been chipped in the course of manufacture, and it was cut in where the string had formerly fastened it to the arrow stick. I looked at it curiously. What was its history? Perhaps it had been shot at some fierce Comanche by a Cheyenne warrior, or it may have struck against the canvas wagon of some pale-face immigrant. Who, indeed, could guess the history of that bit of sharpened stone? But, however that may be, I can vouch for the subsequent history of the one I found, for I gave it to a small, tow-headed maiden in the fourth grade at school as a token of my undying affection, and regretted it a short time afterward, as it occurred to me what a fine watch charm it would have made.

As we went down the slope towards the cabin, it had become dark, a few stars were out, and the night wind was moaning over the lonely plains. We went to the cabin and rolled in the blankets on the floor, while Ed climbed into his bunk. No sooner had he got settled than the end came down with a crash. This was not so much of a surprise to Jim as it was to Ed.

"What's the matter, Ed, are your feet too heavy?" inquired Jim.

No answer from Ed, who was thoroughly mad, and he slept on that inclined plane of the boards all night.

We woke up about four o'clock and discovered that our ears were cold, and accordingly we pulled the blankets around our heads and then our feet suffered. It was no use trying to sleep and the floor grew harder and harder, turn as we would; so we stretched and crawled out just as the first approach of dawn was making gray the western sky.

"I wish the sun would get up," said Tom, with chattering teeth.

But we didn't have to wait long, for soon there appeared a band of blue in the eastern horizon, curtained with red mist, and then the sun made his triumphal appearance.

We divided for the day's sport; Tom and Ed going east on the plains after antelope, while Jim and I took our rifles and went west into the Divide country, in search of mountain lions, catamounts and specimens. The last we saw of the other two boys; they were mere specks on the distant ridge. Our way lay at first through a country of plain and pine, and the sun shone so fiercely upon us that we could hardly realize that a few hours before we had been shivering with cold. After a while we reached the base of one of the mesas, with its walls as sheer as the Palisades and rising several hundred feet above the level plains,

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while the earth sloped up against the perpendicular wall for a third of its height, and on the slope grew pine and cottonwood trees and tangled underbrush.

We explored along the north bluff of the mesa, where we found some fine specimens of agatized wood with the rough outside bark yellow and encrusted with small stones and a heart of beautiful gray and mottled agate. We also picked up many flints of varying colors, red, gray and yellow, of the kind that the Indians made arrowheads. They looked very fine indeed to us because we had found them. We discovered several caves in the bluff with high and recessed entrances, like those of a great cathedral, and you could imagine that you were passing through into a lofty interior, hung with golden lights.

Only one of the caves ran back far and this we did not follow to the end, for after going in a hundred feet we came to a jumping off place and it was as dark as the heart of the Pyramids, and a damp breeze went past us tainted as with the closeness of the grave. Every kind of danger that we chose to imagine was in the darkness that lay around and below us. Then came the whirr of a rattlesnake just at our feet. Our hearts shrank within us and we got out into the sunshine as soon as we could.

We tried to find some way to scale the perpendicular wall, as we were very anxious to see the top of that mesa where the foot of white boy had probably never been. We finally found a narrow seam running zig-

zag up the bluff, and up we went until we stood at last on the edge of the mesa. It was a little land all to itself, or rather an island rising out of the sea of plains. A person could have lived on that plateau and have been as isolated as though he were marooned on an island in the center of the Pacific. And what a fortress it would have made, strong as Gibraltar!

Suppose there had been a regiment of Regulars or Western Volunteers on that mesa; and suppose the plains below were covered with a hostile army, thousands and thousands, on the one side the French, in coats of blue and pants of red, and on the other an army of Germans, in uniforms of green and blue and buff and black helmets with gleaming spikes; and then the handful of Americans, in their rough blue uniforms and slouch hats, holding this fort against the enemy, well, they wouldn't have touched them!

One Johnny Green would say to another, "You see that big Dutchman on that bay horse, waving his sword? Well, watch me drop him," and so he did. "Shucks, that ain't anything," said the other; "you see that little Frenchman with a star on his stomach? Watch me nip him," and it was done. But I must leave this interesting situation to be dealt with by the war novelist, and return to the paths of peace.

To our great surprise we found that we were not the first to tread that enchanted mesa, for right in the middle of it we came across a streak of cultivated ground; a number of furrows had been turned in the

hard dry earth, and there was a scattering growth of oats and at one end some stunted corn. Their dwarfed growth spelt out the agricultural epitaph of some poor rancher.

As we strolled over the mesa we found quite a number of Indian arrowheads, and it was easy enough to imagine that this had once been a rendezvous for them, and we could almost see the tall braves standing on the edge, scanning the plains for their prey, with eyes as keen as those of the vulture. From the broad deck of the mesa we could look far out across the plains, and along the eastern sky moved the showers, now purple in the shadow and then a delicate veil of gray against the light of the horizon. When we reached the western edge of the plateau, we looked directly down into "Bijou Basin," with its green meadows and a few scattered ranch houses of white, surrounded by their corporal guard of cottonwood trees; and the Basin was encircled by the mesa walls of yellow sandstone. The sounds of ranch life came to us softened by the distance, with a suggestion of homeliness. It was a spot that, in the Old World and in the old times, would have been chosen for a monastery, a place of seclusion and sacred rest and meditation. Just across from where we stood, midway between our plateau and another, rose to a level height a circular rock, or, rather, it was a broken pillar of the Temple of the Sun, Baalbec, around which the dirt of centuries had been piled and heaped until two-thirds of it was concealed. This peak is known as "Fremont's Fort," and there is a story

associated with it that I will relate as soon as Jim and I have reached the "Fort" in safety.

We found it very difficult work climbing down the western wall of the mesa. Jim took a different route from the one I selected and came to grief, that was not a necessary result of his action, however. He climbed down half-way when he discovered that he could get no further, for a sheer wall fell below him for some seventy feet, and he found it impossible to climb back, a not infrequent experience in scaling precipitous cliffs or mountains.

He was directly between the horns of the dilemma. He had the choice of either breaking his neck climbing up or breaking it climbing down. He stood on a narrow ledge some six inches wide and his heels resting on the air and his fingers fastened in a crevice of the rock. There seemed nothing for me to do but to go down to one of the ranches in the Basin for help, and the nearest one was at least three miles distant, and Jim might in that time become dizzy and tumble down.

While I was debating what was best to do and adjuring Jim to hold on tight, he began to turn slowly around with great caution until his back was flat against the wall of the rock. He didn't look down, but gazed straight before him; but I dare say he wasn't admiring the view.

"Look out," he said, "I'm going to jump."

At first I thought he was crazy, then I saw what he meant. The slender top of a tall pine came to within about ten feet of Jim's ledge and was the same

distance from the precipice. I saw him crouch for the jump, for a second he hesitated, then he launched out and came spraddling through the air like a flying squirrel. Like Lucifer he fell, but his downward progress did not take so long. He missed the top of the tree and struck among the smaller branches. Crash! Crash! I thought every bone would be broken, but fortunately he struck a larger limb and his downward flight was stayed. It did not take him long to get on *terra firma*. He wasn't hurt, only the skin was scratched off his arms and legs and his clothes were badly torn.

"How did you feel coming down, Jim?" I inquired.

"Oh, kinder ticklish all over and like my stomach was empty."

We got down the rest of the way easily enough and began our attack of Fremont's Fort. Up we went over loose rocks and through thorny bushes, until we came to the base of the rock. At first we could find no way to reach the top. There seemed not to be a crevice where even a snake could crawl up; but on the southwest side the symmetry of the rock was broken by a narrow path. By this we made our ascent to the top, which was large enough for several couples to dance around on. A cleft a few feet in depth, in which grew some small bushes, split the rock straight across, and there were also a few water pockets, but the sun had sucked up the last drop of water, which was very inconsiderate of him, as Jim and I were extremely thirsty. It was too hot to stay long on top of the rock, and so we descended and took shelter in

the shade of a clump of pines that grew close to the rock; but we were still several hundred feet above the plain. And while Jim and I are resting in the shade, with our backs against the cool stone, I may as well tell you the story of Fremont's Fort.

There was a time when this peak was a storm center and the basin that lay below us, so peaceful in the sunshine, was a veritable whirlpool of howling, dancing redskins. Years and years ago the pathfinder, Fremont, was on his way across the western half of the continent, blazing out a path for immigration. He and his party had been out very many days on the lonely plains and were growing tired indeed of their monotony, when, to their joy, they saw on the western horizon and yet several days' journey distant, the white pyramid of the Peak, and as they went on he rose majestically upwards, until his kingly presence seemed to dominate the widespread plains. The country became more and more diversified. Here and there moved bands of deer and antelope, grazing over the plains. It was late one afternoon when the column approached the eastern end of the Divide, where the country began to grow rough and broken, and on the ridges appeared the advance skirmishers of the armies of the mountain pines.

"That is a curious looking hill over there to the northwest," said the leader of the column, pointing with his gauntleted hand, "it reminds me of a fort."

"We will call it 'Fremont's Fort,' sir," said the young lieutenant who was riding near the General, and Fremont's Fort it is to this day.

Fremont, who was not averse to compliments from his subordinates, seemed well pleased. After a while he summoned the lieutenant to his side.

"Take some of your men and scout in the direction of"—he hesitated, and then continued—"Fremont's Fort. The country seems to be an interesting one; but you must keep a sharp lookout for Hostiles."

This caution was not unnecessary, for large parties of Indians had been seen to the north of the command for several days. The lieutenant saluted, evidently delighted with his mission. The column halted, and it did not take him long to make his selection, for he knew the men he wanted. Then, leaving the main body, the six troopers galloped away in column of twos across the level plain, the lieutenant at their head. In a short time they had crossed the ridge and were out of sight of the main command. It was an overcast afternoon in the late fall, and the clouds extended in swells of dark blue on and on over the endless plains to the east, gradually coming lower and lower; and in the west over the range, they rolled in somber majesty. There was a dampness in the air that indicated a coming snow. For several miles the detachment, with the rhythmic beating of the horses' hoofs, went at a steady gallop up the slope of the Divide.

"Halt!" and the troopers stopped almost in their tracks. The lieutenant bent from his saddle and looked at the ground. There was no need for him to dismount.

"Indians, and plenty of them," he said, cheerfully,

"We have cut their fresh trail. They are going north."

Then the troop moved on at the command and in a short time crossed the Divide. The country toward the north and east was open, and with no apparent cover for ambuscade. The troopers with trained eyes scanned the plains before them, and there was nothing to be seen save now and then a jack-rabbit, that would jump up from behind a soapweed and go bouncing down the slope, or a coyote, that would go slinking off like a stealthy shadow. Then suddenly on a low ridge about half a mile to the north appeared a party of braves, as if they had been summoned from the ground. A second before, that ridge had been bare of life with not a moving object on it. They stood at gaze for a moment, and then with hoarse yells they swept in a semicircle around the soldiers, bending their lithe bodies forward to lend their weight to the impetus of their flying ponies. The lieutenant glanced quickly around and saw a still larger party coming down the slope behind them, brandishing their weapons above their heads.

"Cut off," he said calmly. He realized the seriousness of the situation, for he knew the Indians would not make a show down of that kind, unless they had unlimited stuff to back it. But the soldiers continued at a steady gallop, as yet paying no heed to the Indians, and so they grew bolder and bolder and closed in. Suddenly on a knoll three hundred yards to the right a big brave appeared, the feathers sweeping from his head almost to the ground, and an ornament

could be seen dangling in front of his naked breast. He poised like a hawk for a second, then darted towards the command and wheeled and fired.

"Drop that fellow, McPherson," the lieutenant commanded, and at the word, a large saturnine looking trooper drew his carbine to his shoulder like a flash, his powerful frame half turned in the saddle, then came the report of a carbine, and the buck pitched forward, clutching wildly at his horse's mane. A grim smile was on the trooper's face as he faced around in the saddle. The Indians, after this, kept at a more respectful distance, but were still coming in from all sides. Just then the keen eye of the lieutenant saw a party of them moving like shadows along the base of the bluff to the south. The country was becoming more and more broken, and it looked as if they were being driven into a cul de sac.

"There's nothing to do but cut and run for it," he thought.

The gait had been even as yet, and the horses were as fresh as when they left the command; in fact, they were just warming to their work, and the troopers were picked men and light riders, and their animals were better than the Indian ponies for a long run. Then came a last volley that sent three Indians tumbling, and the troopers swept on, the wind of their speed tossing their horses' manes back like curling foam, and a mile ahead rose Fremont's Fort. The Indians came racing behind them with wild yells, and their little ponies were scampering like frightened rabbits, while the tall braves leaned forward to the

sides of their ponies' manes and with their feet almost touching the ground. They seemed as if one with their steeds, as their lithe bodies swayed them to their will. With a fierce dash, the soldiers rushed between the mesa and the Fort, thinking to shake off their enemy, and like gathering streams, from the hillsides poured the Indians on their trail. The lieutenant was a few paces in advance, and as the Basin burst upon his view, he gave a low whistle of surprise, for its whole surface was one vast Indian camp. Without checking the speed of his command, he swerved to the left along the base of the Fort. It was impossible to get through and the Indians were in close pursuit, and a few of the more daring dashed through the narrow defile into the Basin, and were dropped for their pains. The lieutenant hesitated not a second, but wheeling his detail, he made straight up the slope of Fremont's Fort. It was a wild charge, the horses plunging through the bushes and over rocks and fallen trees. Then came a flight of arrows and a volley of bullets; some of the arrows struck the haunches of the horses, but the bullets went wild. Then they reached the base of the rock, and here the lieutenant faced his problem. It was easy enough for the soldiers to climb up and protect themselves for a time at least from the Indians; but the horses must be guarded at all hazards or eventual escape would be impossible. There was a clump of a dozen pines standing near the base of the rock, and behind them the horses were placed and some of the fallen timber was dragged up from the slope be-

low and a barricade quickly built from the rock to the pines, so that the horses were shut in a sort of box stall. The men removed the saddles and piled them under the pines, and then rubbed down their animals with bunches of dried grass; and after a while they were allowed to have their oats, which they nuzzled around in the gunny-sacks, comfortably, as though there were not a few thousand Indian devils below them trying by every hook and crook to get a shot at them; but they were well protected, and this they seemed to realize.

The lieutenant left three of his men to guard the horses, and with the remainder climbed up to the top of the rock to reconnoiter. With narrowing eyes he looked and below he saw the moving crowds of warriors. There were hundreds and hundreds of them, and the floor of the Basin was covered with their tepees, from which slender breaths of blue smoke were rising toward the lowering clouds. To his ears there came the loud beating of the tom-toms, the yells of the warriors, and the quieter intervals were filled with the multitudinous sound of a great camp of savages. The lieutenant stood near the edge of the rock and the men kept out of sight, by his orders, in the cleft that seamed the center of the rock; for there was no need for them to expose themselves or waste their ammunition, for they would need every cartridge before the work cut out for them was done. The lieutenant was in full view of the redskins below, and through his field-glass he scanned with imperturbable composure the landscape below him,

noting every detail with care. His searching glance traveled very slowly along the eastern wall of the basin and then back again, and he noted with especial interest that there was a band of ponies herded on the southern side near the gap that cut through to the plains.

It was evident that he had some scheme in his mind. As he stood there an arrow now and then would come sailing upwards and then dart across the rock with a swish, and one passed under his hat brim close to his ear; but it might have been a fly buzzing past for all the interest that he showed. Just then came a sharp report of a rifle from the western mesa opposite the Fort and a bullet left a splash of lead near his feet. Then almost like an instantaneous answer a carbine rang out behind him and he saw an Indian who had been concealed behind a log on the mesa jump into the air and then lie quiet and limp.

"You nipped him that time, Larrie," said the red-headed sergeant to the trooper who had just fired the shot.

"They command our position, it seems," the lieutenant said quietly.

Then he ordered the men to bring up some of the fallen timber from the slope of the Fort, and a barricade was built against the fire of the enemy. Behind this the men ate their supper in calm unconcern, while below there howled and danced their savage foes.

"I have got to get through their lines and get word to our command," said the lieutenant, "or these

gentlemen will be giving a scalp-dance in our honor this time to-morrow night. When it gets dark I shall make a break to get through. There is no use trying it with a horse."

"I am a better runner on foot than you, sor," said the red-headed sergeant, saluting. "They'll be fleet Injuns that follow, sez young Lochinvar," but the lieutenant had his plan laid out and would not listen to the appeals of his men to allow them to take the risk in his place.

Meantime, with the coming of the gray night, it had begun to snow furiously and the Basin was whirling with dancing flakes, and the great fires with which the Indians had encircled the Fort shone faintly through the storm; and the prancing figures of the Hostiles, as they chanted in wild dances, were like moving shadows in the white gloom. So confident were the Indians that the white soldiers were at their mercy and that they could not escape, that they did not notice the slight, dark figure of the lieutenant creeping down the side of the Fort; only his horse recognized him and neighed in greeting.

From bush to bush he crept, and at last he reached the base of the Fort, and was in imminent danger. Beneath the gloomy pines below the rock the soldiers were ready for a rush to the rescue, pistols in hand, expecting to hear the wild clamor that would proclaim the Indians' discovery of him. The snap of a twig, the rolling of a rock, and in an instant they would strike his trail; or some of them might cross the dark line he had made in that soft coating of the

snow, and like lean, lithe hounds they would be upon his track. Slowly and listening intently for every sound, he made his way cautiously toward the eastern wall where lay his line of escape, expecting every second to step on some ambushed brave. Right ahead, not twelve feet away, stood a dark body directly in his path. He could see it dimly through the driving snow. Crouching he waited; it was his opponent's move, but not a motion did he make, until there came a sudden gust of wind, and then a dark bush swayed back and forth. That was all, but it had been enough to make the lieutenant stop; and it was just as well; for at that moment his intent ear caught a sound that made him draw back into the center of a thick clump of scrub oaks, and in a few seconds he heard the guttural sounds and grunts of a party of Indians coming towards his hiding-place. Then he peered through the sheltering branches and saw the foremost braves stealthily but swiftly bending forward with the crouching instinct of a beast of prey. Another and another passed until twelve had gone by and merged into the storm. He dared not wait another moment; they might cross his tracks, and he was about to step out into the trail, when, to his utter astonishment, he saw another Indian coming at a dog-trot after the others.

The lieutenant stood perfectly motionless, not a foot from where the Indian must pass. He could not escape detection and he knew it. Then the Indian saw him and stopped crouching, for a fragment of a second, his eyes gleaming with frightened ferocity;

and then as quick as thought the lieutenant sprang for him. The brute dashed to one side, but his moment of surprise was fatal. With a crash the butt of the lieutenant's revolver came down on the side of the Indian's skull, and he fell with a crash into the wet bushes, stunned, probably killed. The noise of the fracas, slight as it was, was almost sure to bring the party of braves who had just passed, back again; and so, trusting to the luck of the United States Army (which is at times abominably bad), the lieutenant went swiftly along the back trail of the braves.

Soon he came to the east wall of the Basin and went rapidly along a pony path that skirted the base of the rock. After going about half a mile, he felt instinctively that he was being followed, and he stopped and listened. Behind him he heard the soft tread as of moccasined feet, and then the sound stopped. Then he started on and again came the accompanying footfalls behind him, drawing nearer. In a short time he would be out in the open with absolutely no chance to make a fight for his life. Then with a sudden resolution that seemed rash in the extreme, he turned immediately on his own track. With his knife and revolver ready for instant action, he went swiftly on the back trail to meet his gliding, stealthy foe; and then his foot struck against a moving body and he fell forward. With a yell of surprise and terror, a big panther sprang off into the bushes.

In a short time he came where the herd of ponies was huddled together. There was one with a trailing rope, and this one he caught and jumped on its

back. After a few ineffectual plunges the pony recognized his master and started off. Through the southern gap they went and out onto the plains, the lieutenant guiding his horse after the manner of the Indians, by his swaying body. That was a wild ride, the same kind that Mazeppa took over the howling steppes of Russia. As they sped on through the storm and darkness, horse and rider were soon encased in the pale armor of the snow. On they went with never slackening speed, over the wild plains and were swallowed up like a spray of foam in a weltering sea.

It was a desperate case with the besieged the next day. The morning sun had melted the snow from the rock and shone brilliantly into the sparkling Basin. Powder-stained and some of them bleeding from wounds, the little group of United States Regulars fought with grim desperation against the overwhelming odds; and they had just a few rounds of ammunition left.

"It'll be just subsequent to the battle, mother, if the boys don't get here quick," said a young trooper with a bandage round his head.

"Hello," exclaimed another, "look at those devils scattering on the mesa, something's up," and there was. For through the gap came the head of the blue column and down the slope they galloped. There was the flash of sun on their arms, the thunder of horses' hoofs, as the column rose and fell in perfect rhythm. There was a wild scramble of the Hostiles and some escaped and some did not.

"It was a masterly maneuver, sor," said the red-headed sergeant to the lieutenant; "we kept the enemy amused till you got here and cut them up."

After the pursuit of the Indians was finished, the column reformed and rode away westward, and there Fremont's Fort stands as a monument to the bravery of that little group of Regulars who held it until the rescue came.

Hard, indeed, was it for me to realize on that warm afternoon in September, as Jim and I sat below the bastion of the Fort, looking out over the quiet Basin sleeping in the light of the westering sun, that years ago, amid a winter's storm, the Indians by thousands had whirled in the savage orgies of their wild dances about the isolated peak on which we now were so peacefully resting.

When Jim and I got back to the log camp, Ed and Tom welcomed us with the news that the horses had pushed the corral gate open and were gone. The least we could hope was that they would stop at the home ranch and not go on to the Springs, some forty miles distant. It was no use shirking the issue. Jim and I were responsible for those horses and it was for us to recapture them. We aroused Tom and Ed at half-past three the next morning and made them cook batter cakes for us before we started out on our trip. As we sat eating in the cold morning, with our sombreros on our heads and pistols at our hips, by the dim light of the smoking lantern, we had a pleasant feeling of excitement, as though we were

starting out on an enterprise of great peril and moment.

It was just four o'clock when we left the cabin. We started briskly off through the cold, still air. The half moon was above the horizon and shed a mysterious light over the vague plains and made the pine-clad regions of the Divide look black, and far to the west we could divine the great range rising from the shadow into the semi-luminous light. On the crest of a ridge just ahead we saw a shadowy body that stood at gaze for a moment and then disappeared, and there came to our ears the long-drawn wail of a coyote; then the sound was broken into a succession of short, sharp barks and ended in a prolonged howl. One lone lorn coyote can constitute himself a whole chorus of howling demons.

In a short time we crossed the Divide and had just started down the southern slope, when from a low swale in front of us several Texas steers rose and retreated a short distance, and stood watching us with much curiosity and occasionally shaking their horned fronts. A man on horseback they could very well understand, but the presence of two small boys on foot at that very early hour on the morning, crossing their lonely range, was a phenomenon quite beyond the limits of their bovine experience. I looked hastily around to see what means of escape there was in case they should come for us, and saw none, not a tree, not a house, not a fence, for miles. One big slab-side-1 steer, with brindled neck and wide spread horns, came out from the bunch, shaking his horned head, and

stopped a short distance from us and pawed the dust back against his great shoulders. Jim drew his revolver, 38 caliber it was.

"You are a dead cow if you come any nearer," he said, scornfully, disregarding the beast's true classification.

The drop was ours and he recognized this with true western philosophy, and came no closer. It is rare, indeed, that these wild cattle attack a man, even on foot, but they will at times. However, the chief danger is from getting in a stampede.

The dawn was now approaching and the morning breeze sounded pleasantly in our ears as it wandered on over the indefinite plains, whispering softly to the flowers and bending grasses. The moon began to lose color, and very soon its golden life-blood would be drained away by the sun, and it would soon lie on the sky of morning, the pale ghost of its former radiance. Then the distant brow of the far-off Peak was tinged with rosy glow, and while the plains still lay in the shadow, the light traveled down the range from crest to slope, from slope to the shadowy foothills, until the mountains stood forth fully revealed; and then splinters and spears of light darted over the line of the western ridge, and here and there on the wide plains the windows of the distant ranch houses flashed out, as when the sun strikes to whiteness the scattered sails on the broad seas. Then the plains, cleared of all shadows, lay before us in the beauty of a new day, and upon them rested the freshness of the morning seas.

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They pricked up their ears when they saw us, and then turned and calmly trotted out of the gate and took the road for home, a distance of thirty-five miles. Here was the De'il to pay. I started cat-a-corner across the field to head them off, and when they saw me coming, they serenely quickened their pace. My breath grew very short and my heart was extremely hot within me; I was too choked for utterance, which was perhaps just as well, for I feel quite sure that the Recording Angel had his pen dipped in the ink, ready to take down my remarks. I did some very fine cross-country running until I struck a plowed field, which reduced my speed by one-half, and before I could reach the barbed wire fence those horses had turned down a broad lane that ran for ten straight miles between barbed wire fences, and as they entered this home stretch they were a good half a mile in the lead. Just then I saw two cowboys coming up this lane from the south; I climbed on the fence and waved to them frantically, and fortunately they interpreted my signals aright and headed the horses off and drove them back into the corral for us. They did not wait to receive our expressions of appreciation, but slouch-

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Tom in bad humor, and a very gloomy horizon before me!

"George," my father would say, "where is that new buckboard and those horses?"

"Sir," I would reply, "I cannot tell a lie; I think the Indians stole them."

Like horrid phantoms, these ideas whirled through my mind as panting I ran after those accursed horses. How I hated them! They had now turned south and were making for the open. Every now and then the buckboard would jounce into the air and I thought the whole thing would collapse. Then they came to the bank of a gully and the horses leaped across and the buckboard went flying after them,—and then they stopped. *Mirabile dictu!* It seemed too good to be true, but it was a fact. The gully was not over five feet in depth. I saw that the front wheels were wedged into the gully and the buckboard was canted up on the other bank. The tugs held and the horses soon gave up trying to get loose, so I had the whole concern captured as neat as you please; but I had to wait until the other boys came up before I could get the buckboard extracted. The axle-tree was twisted and one of the hind wheels was a little askew, and that was all the damage; and I am perfectly willing to give a most cordial testimonial to the manufacturers of that particular vehicle. I can say truthfully that there was nothing flimsy about it.

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There was no sound save the murmur of the vagrant winds, with something of the primeval sadness in their tones as though the voice of the departed tribes which had once wandered over these plains was speaking through them. And over all there was the beauty and charm as of a tranquil, sunwrapt sea.

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As we traveled over the smooth trails of the prairie road, we talked of very many things, and especially of the coming school year. This was our last outing before the fateful Ides of September, and we looked forward to them with mingled fear and pleasure. They meant grammar, algebra, Cæsar's Commentaries, so full of gall and bitterness for the young. But then there were the baseball and football. Jim expected to play full back on the team, and he was in fine condition to, after our various trips; and we

needed some more men, and would we get them? We canvassed the situation thoroughly.

It was approaching sundown as we rattled through the shady streets of aristocratic "Spring Town." There were young men and maidens with tennis rackets, strolling along the sidewalks, dressed à la Summer, and along the well-groomed avenues drove stylish traps with young ladies under parasols of varied hues, with a pug dog or young man by their sides. It all looked very nice after our week's outing on the plains. We occasionally met people who turned and looked after us, but they didn't recognize us: we didn't want them to. Then we saw a slip of a girl crossing the street just in front of us; very pretty she looked, at least so thought one of our party, dressed as she was in her summer costume, with a pink shirt waist, and a straw hat with the slightest rakish tilt to it. She looked at us half shyly, and Ed nudged Jim ostentatiously in the side; but the embarrassed Jim pulled his hat further down over his ears and tried to get behind me. But Ed pulled him back, so that concealment was impossible. We took off our hats with elaborate politeness to make up for our disreputable appearance.

"Won't you ride, Mame?" Ed called to her. "Jim says he wants you to."

The girl flushed and smiled but shook her head vigorously, and Jim took the first opportunity to punch Ed vigorously below the belt and doubled him up temporarily.

It was dark as we whirled into the lane and stopped

with a flourish before the house. They all came out to greet us.

"Are you all alive?" some one asked. We answered in the affirmative.

"We haven't bought any meat for Sunday," said one, "because we knew you would bring us some antelope steak."

This was a standard joke at our expense, because we usually returned from our hunting trips with large appetites but no game. We had the antelope covered with a blanket on the back of the buckboard, and managed to look very cheap about our ill luck.

"Hello, hello, what have you boys got here? Antelope! I declare! Well, who would have thought it!" said another.

"Bought it down town, boys, didn't you?" drawled the bulky hired man in blue overalls, who stood leaning against the fence.

"You're a liar," said Jim, "you old Missourian, we killed it ourselves."

Then we went in to wash up and put camphor-ice and vaseline on our lips, which were quite cancered from tip to tip from drinking alkali water. We smiled with difficulty and laughter was impossible. Ed made some interesting remarks about the state of Jim's lips and the girl in pink, which was appreciated by the audience but not by Jim. Then we filed into the dining-room, ready for supper, and the colored cook had supper ready for us.

OUR SATURDAY AT HOME.

THE old ranch bears to my memory the same relation that the old oaken bucket bore to the recollection of the poet, and from the past its scenes come back to me with the same sense of coolness and refreshment that is associated with the dripping and moss-covered bucket that rose from the well.

That ranch was an ideal place for boys as it furnished chances for hunting, fishing and camping out. As it was the scene of some thrilling military operations, my brother, Tom, had a military company, and also was the base of supplies for our excursions into the mountains and out onto the plains, I may as well explain how the land lay. This ranch of a hundred acres was in the valley of the Fountain que Bouille, about a mile from the town on the mesa, and three miles to the west rose the rampart of the range with old Pike's Peak in the center, and in the opposite direction lay the plains. A cold and muddy stream where we used to swim ran through the length of it, and its course was marked by cottonwood trees, and underneath them was a thick growth of willows and brush through which ran narrow cowpaths, and many were the ambuscades along these trails, which we, a fierce tribe of Indians with turkey feathers in our hair

and streaks of paint upon our faces, laid for the unsuspecting pale-faced boys from town.

On the pasture land back from the creek ranged a herd of fierce Jersey cattle; at least we so represented them to our acquaintances, and by means of a red pocket-handkerchief we would try to arouse the wrath of the black bull, El Moro, by name, and then our young friends would make for the fence, only to be caught by the detaining clutch of the barbed wire. You may be sure if he had really come no barbed wire fence would have stopped Tom and myself for a moment. Near to the house were several fish ponds which were supplied with a spring of very clear cold water, and the overflow from the ponds ran in a ditch through the meadow to a much larger one about a quarter of a mile from the house, where there was skating in winter and duck shooting in the fall.

Then there was the big barn painted white, with a red roof and a cupola with a gilt arrow which was supposed to give the direction of the wind, a useless piece of information in Colorado, for you could always tell which way the wind was coming from, the only question being exactly where it was going to carry you. This barn had big, sliding doors through which the loads of hay were driven, and when the bay and the loft over the horses was chuck full to the shingles on the roof we used to make tunnels far down into the hay, which were splendid places to hide and were known only to a select few.

On this particular Saturday of which I am going to tell, Tom and I had planned having rather a good

time. But in the morning there was some work to be done and in the afternoon we would be at home to our numerous friends. For my share I had to help my grandfather hoe in the garden. He showed me how to shift the dirt around the cabbage stalks and to thin out the beets without pulling them all up, and also to distinguish between the weeds and the young lettuce, which I was not always careful to do. As we bent over our work he would tell me stories about when he and Matt Vassar were boys in New York and Poughkeepsie was but a village.

I can see him now as he stood at the end of the row giving me time to straighten out my tired back, and continuing on his line of anecdotes as he rested on his hoe handle, in appearance small and bent, with white hair and beard, but in his face there was an unwavering cheerfulness which the years served only to increase, and which was only marred when the pesky boys ran over his young vegetables. How long the morning seemed; every now and then I would take a look at the sun, which was blazing so fiercely from the blue sky, but it barely crawled on its way to the noon hour. But at last I saw the narrow gauge train, with its line of red coaches ending in black Pullmans, as it went coasting down the valley, and I knew that it was half-past eleven and that the time of my release was at hand.

In a brief time there came the glad clang clang of the dinner bell from the back porch, and I dropped my hoe with the skill of a disciplined workman and made for the house; but my grandfather finished out

his row and mine too. I met my brother, Tom, approaching the gate with a wheelbarrow load of wood, and of course slammed the gate shut instead of holding it politely open, much to his disgust, which he did not hesitate to express.

"I want to give you something to do; you have been loafing and I have been working hard," I said.

"Oh, yes, you've been a-workin'," he replied with supreme contempt; "I know you, you've been listening to grandpa's stories and let him do all the hoeing. When I get inside I'll give you a good kickin'."

Just then my father came along and Tom postponed his contemplated exercise. We hurried through dinner, not, however, slighting our appetites. There were several things we wanted to do before the boys from town come down on us. We rushed out slamming the door hard, but we came back by request and shut that door softly, and this duty being performed, away we went down to the square pond where our two ships lay anchored in the stream, alias a ditch.

Tom's boat was about two feet in length and was carved out of a wooden block by his own hand, the mark of the chisel being plainly seen where the deck was hollowed out. She had an iron bar for a keel and was painted red with the name R. Crusoe in white lead on her port bow. The anchor Tom had cast in lead and it looked quite realistic. To complete this important description it is necessary to add that she was bark-rigged and carried a crew of wooden soldiers or marines, who were rather unsteady on their

stopped a short distance from us and pawed the dust back against his great shoulders. Jim drew his revolver, 38 caliber it was.

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As we traveled over the smooth trails of the prairie road, we talked of very many things, and especially of the coming school year. This was our last outing before the fateful Ides of September, and we looked forward to them with mingled fear and pleasure. They meant grammar, algebra, Cæsar's Commentaries, so full of gall and bitterness for the young. But then there were the baseball and football. Jim expected to play full back on the team, and he was in fine condition to, after our various trips; and we

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tank, and we heard the constant drip, drip of water. We found four fine places to hide in, viz.: the space between the tank and the house at each of the corners, where pieces of wood were nailed across, forming a kind of ladder. Jim and myself climbed up into one dark corner, and the rest divided themselves between the others.

After we were securely in our places the guide went back to notify the searching party to look for us. After what seemed a very long time to us in the dark, we heard sounds coming in the direction of the tank, and pretty soon there rose the loud voice of the guide, intended as a warning to us. Suddenly the door was pulled open, letting a flood of light into our prison, and we drew back into our corners.

"Come out of there We see you," yelled Tom. This was a mere bluff on his part and we kept quiet. In a minute they came crouching stealthily under the tank, and Tom and Will looked up into our corner directly at us, while we drew back as close to the wall as we could and held our breath. Then Tom went out into the garden and got a long pole and began poking around where we were. This was very unpleasant, so we caught the bar above us and drew our feet up as far as we could, and slam-bang would go that pole against the weather boarding. Tom evidently meant business and it was lucky he didn't strike us.

"I guess they can't be up there," said Will.

Just then there came an incident which discovered us. Samivel had been gazing up into the corner op-

posite, and evidently his bright upturned face was too great a temptation for Ed Deven to resist.

"Here, you quit that spitting," we heard him yell.

The game was up and Tom and the rest made for the door.

"Stop!" we yelled.

Then we prepared to take our three jumps. The first was a long drop to the ground, the next was a wide spraddling one that brought us to the door, and we could see some of the other side edging nervously away, taking as much ground as they dared.

"That ain't fair. You come back here, Will Speers," said Jim.

Now the third jump took us into the open and right amongst them. It was going to be a close run for the goal. They had the start, but we had two of the fastest runners. Every one of us was on tiptoe for flight, as the poet says. After tantalizing them by several false starts, Jim yelled, "Run, sheep, run."

Then away we went. Some of both sides took the easiest but longest way through the garden gate, but Jim and I made for the high picket fence. Jim scrambled up and over first and jumped down. I lost my balance, and little Samivel was trying frantically to get through a narrow place where a picket was off. Jim was twenty feet ahead of me when I got on my feet and about fifty yards from the goal. Just then Will Speers came round the corner of the chicken house, and across the open space they went nip and tuck, converging toward the goal.

"Go it, Jim," I yelled. But the other fellow won

by about six inches, and we all came panting in except Samivel. We had to go to his assistance. He was struggling with the energy of an enraged bantam and with every effort the rusty nails tore his clothes the more. His mother would have wept to have heard his expressions, and methinks he would have wept with her.

"Why don't you fellers get me loose instead of standin' there laughin' ? My pants is all tore," he explained in bitter anger, and as soon as he was released he flew at us, clawing and striking, and it became necessary to cool him off under the hydrant, an unpleasant duty which was faithfully performed. It was now late and time for the boys to go home, which they did very reluctantly, after we made several important plans for the next Saturday.

After the boys were all gone we went down into the meadow to drive up the cows, which were standing in the shade of a cottonwood tree, peacefully chewing their cud and occasionally swinging their heads round to get rid of the gnats. The sun, which was just on the crest of the mountains, sent the shadows of the house and the cottonwood trees far across the meadow. Then Tom and I led out the horses to water and they would stop and stretch, for they were mighty tired standing on the hard floor during the hot day. After the chores were finished there was enough light left for us to play "Knock up and catch," which we did until the ball could no longer be seen, even when we knocked it straight up into the air; then we quit.

MY GRANDFATHER'S GHOST STORIES.

TOM and I found it unusually hard to study that Saturday evening. We had enjoyed an exciting day, and the examples in decimals seemed singularly uninteresting. The only thrilling moment was when I turned over to the answer column in the back of the book. My heart jumped with pleasure, for the first two figures of the answer agreed with mine, a most remarkable coincidence, and by changing a 3 to a 5 my example added up correctly, and really the 3 looked very much like a 5; but these short cuts to learning are not to be recommended.

But by no hocus-pocus could I make the next look anything like the mystic figures in the back of the book, and I kicked Tom under the table to attract his attention, for he had the palms of his hands against his ears and his lips were moving audibly as he scowled at his speller.

"Let's go over to grandpa's."

"All right," he said.

I looked everywhere for my hat. It was neither under the table nor thrown in the corner (I subsequently found it on the hat-rack), so I had to be content with a gingham sunbonnet which I discovered in the kitchen. We went out very carefully so as not

to disturb our parents, but they overheard us and we had to explain before we could get away that we certainly had most of our lessons learned and we would surely get up very early Monday morning and finish them. Then having got free we rushed off across the field to my grandfather's house and burst through the door into the kitchen.

"My, boys, how you frightened me," said my grandmother, looking up from the dough she was kneading.

"Let me help you, grandma," I said.

"No, no, you will get your hands all flour,"—as if that made any difference.

"I wonder what makes me so thirsty," said Tom in a soliloquizing tone.

My grandmother laughed softly to herself. "There is some crab-apple cider in that white pitcher," she said.

Then she went into the pantry and brought out a plate of cookies. As far back as I can remember we never lacked for cookies at her house. We found grandfather in the dining-room, where there were pitch pine logs burning in the ample fireplace, and the light flickered throughout the room and chased the shadows back and forth on the ceiling. He was busy hammering the sole of a boot, and in the boot was an iron foot which was fastened in a short round stick. This implement generally stood in the corner of the room and my grandfather always spoke of it as "Santa Anna's leg," in honor of the great Mexican general who had a wooden one.

My grandfather paid no attention whatever to us but went on with his work. The tortoise-shell cat, however, who was resting comfortably before the fire with her paws curled back against her chest and with eyes blinking at the blaze, was not so indifferent. As soon as we came in, she got up and stalked out of the room with much dignity and went and curled up in a warm corner behind the stove; but we let her go, as we had things of more importance to do than to amuse the cat.

"You get the corn-popper and I'll shell the corn," said Tom. And soon we had enough of the purple and white grains off the cob to begin operations, and I began to poke down the fire.

"What are you doing to that fire?" asked my grandfather sharply; "you are putting it out and I can't see."

"Never mind, father," said my grandmother, soothingly, as she came to the door, "the boys are real hungry and you have been working over that boot all of the afternoon."

"Say, grandpa, do you think Blaine's going to be elected?" I asked, not altogether for information.

He took the poker from my hand and fixed the fire to his satisfaction before he answered: "The *Tribune*—his favorite paper—" says it's certain, but I don't know. I am afraid them pesky politicians in New York will make trouble. They were always agin De Witt Clinton because he was too smart for them, and it was the same way with Blaine, and they

won't let him be President if they can help it," and he shook his head dubiously.

"Were you always a Republican, grandfather?" I inquired further.

"Yes, and before that I was a Whig. I never seen a Democrat you could trust yet."

"Did you ever see Henry Clay?" I asked.

This statesman's picture hung in the dining-room, an engraving of a tall man of unusual length of limb, seated on a mound by the roadside, and a stream of water running through the woodland at his feet and the Kentucky farm in the background. I always remember his mouth; as vulgarly said, it was adapted for pie.

"I heard Henry Clay speak in Cincinnati just after he was beat for President. People had come from the country all round to hear him. It was the biggest crowd I ever saw and the men cried like children when he said he was going back to his farm to live and thanked them for their constant support. I heard it said that when they told him he was beat for President that a blue shadow passed over his face and he never looked the same again. There is never going to be another man in this country like Henry Clay."

"Say, grandpa, did you ever see any ghosts when you were a boy in New York?" asked Tom, breaking in abruptly. Tom took no interest whatever in the political history of his country.

"Here, you're letting that corn burn," I said, taking the popper out of his hand and shaking it back

and forth over the coals, and soon the grains began to jump around in their wire prison and bloom in white until the mass of them almost pushed the lid off the popper. Then we poured the popcorn into a tin pan, and Tom and myself stretched out on the floor with our feet to the blaze and with our heads resting on a hassock apiece, and the pan of popcorn between us. We felt comfortable, quite so. We knew grandfather would begin his stories if we didn't hurry him. My grandmother came in and took a straight-backed chair in the corner and sat with her hands folded in her lap, looking at us with her kindly face.

"Father, tell them about that time you came home and saw the ghost in the barn."

"Yes, please do," we urged.

He leaned forward with his elbows on his knees and looked into the fire for a few minutes.

"Well," he said finally, "the very first ghost I ever saw was one night when I was coming home from a candy-pull at a neighbor's. It was when I lived at Pokeepsie. It was about eleven o'clock, dark as a pocket and pretty cold. I drove up near the barn doors and got out and began to unhitch. I had just got the traces loose when that horse began to back. I caught him by the head just in time to keep him from turning the buggy over. His ears were pitched forward and he was looking straight into the barn door, which was slid partly open. It was black inside the barn and I couldn't see anything; but that horse did, or leastways he pretended to. Well, it was all I could do to get him out of the buggy without smashing

stopped a short distance from us and pawed the dust back against his great shoulders. Jim drew his revolver, 38 caliber it was.

"You are a dead cow if you come any nearer," he said, scornfully, disregarding the beast's true classification.

The drop was ours and he recognized this with true western philosophy, and came no closer. It is rare, indeed, that these wild cattle attack a man, even on foot, but they will at times. However, the chief danger is from getting in a stampede.

The dawn was now approaching and the morning breeze sounded pleasantly in our ears as it wandered on over the indefinite plains, whispering softly to the flowers and bending grasses. The moon began to lose color, and very soon its golden life-blood would be drained away by the sun, and it would soon lie on the sky of morning, the pale ghost of its former radiance. Then the distant brow of the far-off Peak was tinged with rosy glow, and while the plains still lay in the shadow, the light traveled down the range from crest to slope, from slope to the shadowy foothills, until the mountains stood forth fully revealed; and then splinters and spears of light darted over the line of the western ridge, and here and there on the wide plains the windows of the distant ranch houses flashed out, as when the sun strikes to whiteness the scattered sails on the broad seas. Then the plains, cleared of all shadows, lay before us in the beauty of a new day, and upon them rested the freshness of the morning seas.

It was eight o'clock when we reached the outer fences of the home ranch, just beyond where the Rock Island cuts through from the Big Sandy to the Southern Slope. We vowed as we crossed the heavy soil of the potato field that we would make those horses sweat if we ever laid hands on them.

"There are the brutes in the corral," said Jim.

They pricked up their ears when they saw us, and then turned and calmly trotted out of the gate and took the road for home, a distance of thirty-five miles. Here was the De'il to pay. I started cat-a-corner across the field to head them off, and when they saw me coming, they serenely quickened their pace. My breath grew very short and my heart was extremely hot within me; I was too choked for utterance, which was perhaps just as well, for I feel quite sure that the Recording Angel had his pen dipped in the ink, ready to take down my remarks. I did some very fine cross-country running until I struck a plowed field, which reduced my speed by one-half, and before I could reach the barbed wire fence those horses had turned down a broad lane that ran for ten straight miles between barbed wire fences, and as they entered this home stretch they were a good half a mile in the lead. Just then I saw two cowboys coming up this lane from the south; I climbed on the fence and waved to them frantically, and fortunately they interpreted my signals aright and headed the horses off and drove them back into the corral for us. They did not wait to receive our expressions of appreciation, but slouch-

ing in their saddles, they trotted off to continue their cruise over the plains.

We made excellent time on our return trip to the log camp, and when we arrived there we thought we had a right to enjoy a well-earned rest; so we spent the afternoon lounging on one of the lumber piles which was in the shade of the others. We stretched ourselves out on the blankets in the shade with our heads pillowed on our coats, in a luxury equal to the Grand Turk on his silken divan in his oriental palace. Ed sat on a stump near by, sketching. As I have said before, Ed was quite realistic in his method, and in this sketch our feet were the most prominent features in the landscape, which was realistic enough as far as Jim's were concerned.

The next morning we broke camp, and, packing the buckboard, started for home. We took a circuitous route, as we had plenty of time, and struck a trail to the northeast where Ed and Tom claimed to have located and staked out a bunch of antelope. Our way lay through a country where the Divide and the plains met and interweaved, thus creating a park-like country of pine and plain. We drove midway through a broad, shallow vale which rose gradually to the pine-clad hills on the west wall; while its eastern slope lay in a section of scallops,—I can use no better word to express it,—and the depressions formed narrow pastures, covered with buffalo grass, while the delicate grama-grass gave a tinge of color to them, and a light growth of pines marked the slight ridges separating the depressions. It was in fact an ideal

country for deer or antelope. We were jouncing along at a rattling gait, when Jim pulled up so suddenly that Ed and I lurched over the dashboard.

"There they are," he exclaimed, excitedly, and a thrill went through us as we saw a mile and a half away on a hillside, below some pines, a half a dozen light spots moving. Antelope! Jim turned and drove up one of the side depressions on the western slope, until we were completely hidden from them by the trees. The boys got hurriedly out and Jim plunged under the seat for his rifle; the other two had carried theirs between their knees ready for immediate action. It was considered safer to leave some one with the horses, and I was unanimously chosen, I don't know why I am sure. Of course I did not enjoy staying there, playing coachman, while the rest went off shopping after meat.

"This is a fine place to sketch in," I said not untruthfully to Ed, but I had clearly over-estimated his artistic enthusiasm.

"Sketch your great-grandmother," he said, "I am going after antelope."

"We will drive them down your way," said Tom, consolingly, as he shoved the brass cartridges into the pocket in the side of the rifle.

"Oh, yes, I see a picture of you driving them around," I replied, scornfully; "maybe you fellows will find me here when you come back and maybe you won't." I didn't guess how true a prophecy this threat was to prove.

The boys were soon ready and started eagerly off, and I lost sight of them as they passed over the ridge, and I was left alone like Patience on a Monument, but not smiling at Fate, no, not that. But everything comes to the man who waits, as some one remarks, Job probably. A half an hour must have passed when I heard the faint sound of distant shots. I waited a half minute, and then the horses pricked up their ears. Great Heavens! There were three antelope coming along the ridge, not over a hundred yards away, one behind the other, with their heads up in the air and their slender legs, with their sinews of steel, doubling under them with the rapidity of combined lightning. I jumped out and threw the reins on the ground behind me, and fired. The bullet struck—a puff of dust in front of the foremost antelope. At the report, they seemed to redouble their speed but continued moving in a semicircle along the ridge. I rammed in another cartridge and fired. Then I heard a rush and a rattle behind me, and there the horses were, streaking it down the swale, the buckboard swinging and bouncing, while blankets and provisions were flying out, strewing the plains in richest profusion.

“Whoa, whoa!” I yelled, running at full speed after the runaways. It was no joke for me then, and I can recall just how I felt even now. We were miles from everywhere, and there was nothing to stop those horses this side of home, unless they struck a barbed wire fence, and that would cut them to pieces, and the buckboard would be simply kerbusted. And then to walk across the dusty plains twenty miles, Ed and

Tom in bad humor, and a very gloomy horizon before me!

"George," my father would say, "where is that new buckboard and those horses?"

"Sir," I would reply, "I cannot tell a lie; I think the Indians stole them."

Like horrid phantoms, these ideas whirled through my mind as panting I ran after those accursed horses. How I hated them! They had now turned south and were making for the open. Every now and then the buckboard would jounce into the air and I thought the whole thing would collapse. Then they came to the bank of a gully and the horses leaped across and the buckboard went flying after them,—and then they stopped. *Mirabile dictu!* It seemed too good to be true, but it was a fact. The gully was not over five feet in depth. I saw that the front wheels were wedged into the gully and the buckboard was canted up on the other bank. The tugs held and the horses soon gave up trying to get loose, so I had the whole concern captured as neat as you please; but I had to wait until the other boys came up before I could get the buckboard extracted. The axle-tree was twisted and one of the hind wheels was a little askew, and that was all the damage; and I am perfectly willing to give a most cordial testimonial to the manufacturers of that particular vehicle. I can say truthfully that there was nothing flimsy about it.

Tom was very angry with me on account of my carelessness, and personally I could see no room for explanation. "Just like you," he said. Jim seemed

inclined to take a jocose view of the situation, while Ed grumbled at the reckless way in which the provisions had been thrown about. We went back and picked up the flotsam and jetsam that had been thrown overboard, and nothing was damaged except a pair of field-glasses, one of the lenses of which was badly cracked. I tried to demonstrate to Tom (this glass was a Christmas present to him) that by shutting one eye and looking through the other side, you could see as far and as well as ever; but he could not see it that way.

After we got under way again, I insisted on doing the driving and I kept those horses moving, and there was no stopping between strokes. We soon drove up to where the boys had killed their antelope. It lay in a huddled heap, its prominent brown eyes glazed and a trickle of blood running from its narrow nostrils. How heavy its inert mass seemed as we lifted it into the buckboard! Then we climbed aboard and swung the team around and started for home and civilization.

In a few hours we had left the region of the Divide behind us and went jolting down its southern slope. Oh, that day's voyaging across the plains! The freedom and the exhilaration of it! There was the brilliant sunshine and the far horizons girdled with pearly haze; and the plains rolling on and on, and the Spanish Peaks rising shadowy in the blue haze in the distant Southland, and eastward the level stretches of plains covered with a carpet of grass with a scattered design of masses of yellow, red and purple flowers.

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As we traveled over the smooth trails of the prairie road, we talked of very many things, and especially of the coming school year. This was our last outing before the fateful Ides of September, and we looked forward to them with mingled fear and pleasure. They meant grammar, algebra, Cæsar's Commentaries, so full of gall and bitterness for the young. But then there were the baseball and football. Jim expected to play full back on the team, and he was in fine condition to, after our various trips; and we

and shutting; but I let it be. But in a little while I heard something rocking back and forth over my head in the garret, just as plain as could be. Maybe the old miser was sitting in the chair with a rope round his neck, taking it easy; but it was disturbin'. 'Will you please keep quiet up there?' I said in a loud tone, and it stopped short. In five minutes it was going back and forth again. This time I found my lantern and lit it, and picking up my stick, I started for the garret. The light of the lantern cut up the dark considerable, but outside of it it was blacker than ever; so I held it before me and I was in the shader. I went up the ladder. As I pushed back the door to get into the garret something came rushing past me and my lantern almost went out; but I didn't hear that rockin', it had stopped. Maybe the old gentleman was getting up to receive me. I held the light up real quick and looked all round that garret, and there right in the middle of the floor on some rough boards was a big bowl and the rats were scurrying off in all directions. In the bottom of the bowl was some dry meal and those rats had been scrambling round in it, and that was what kept it rocking back and forth; so I took it up and went down-stairs and went to sleep. The sun woke me up in the morning, shining in my face, and the house didn't look haunted, only dirty and dilapidated. I met some of the boys on the road, and I said, 'Here's your haunted house,' showing them the bowl, and I told them about it, and Matt Vassar, Jr., had to treat the boys. But I reckon that house is haunted to this

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day, and that the school children are just as 'fraid of it as they ever was."

We said good night and started home. As we went past the barn, I said to Tom: "You see that face looking out of the window?"

"Shucks, you're just trying to scare me," but he started to walk faster.

Then I did see a white face looking out behind the cobwebby pane and gazing out into the gloom, and which of us got home first I don't recollect, but I think it was myself.

THE FOURTH OF JULY.

THANKSGIVING, with its mince-pies, turkey and cranberry sauce, and a football game in the afternoon, played under gray skies and with tooting of horns—Thanksgiving, I may say, is good; and Christmas, with a glittering tree or with stocking hung outside the door, which, in the morning, bulge with mysterious presents, and the overflow on the chair or the floor—Christmas, I may remark, is excellent. But as for the small boy, give him the glorious Fourth, with liberty and death, a toy pistol that gives him lockjaw, and a rocket stick that descends and strikes him in the eye. What a long and weary way we older people must have come that we now dread the noise of the torpedoes and the crackling of fire-crackers and prefer the silence of the woods or the murmur of the sea to the patriotic pleasure of firing off barrels of gunpowder.

The day before the Fourth of July was one of anticipation and excitement for us boys; but there were six loads of hay in the meadow below the house which it was necessary to get in before the morrow, and our boy friends turned out to help us, and all the pitchforks were in demand, even the sawed-off one with three tines. How boys delight to work when they

don't have to! They pitched hay all day like good fellows and got red and tired and dusty, and when they went home in the evening, they growled because their mothers asked them to bring in a little coal and wood, they were so tired. There were three of us on a side to pitch hay from the shocks onto the wagon; and we would hurry so as to be able to rush around and help the other side, which we did quite often, to their chagrin and our triumph. In our hurry we occasionally stuck the fork into the hired man on the load, and his remarks were appropriate, but not repeatable.

Hurrah! Here goes the last load, and the horses tug until the skin on their haunches is wrinkled, and the wagon moves slowly through the meadow with the big load swaying at every jolt. Then through the wide open doors of the barn it goes, and the horses' feet scramble on the wooden floor, and with a last effort the hind wheels roll up. Then the horses are taken out and we sit on the wagon tongue and eat a watermelon that has been in the spring until it has been soaked with coolness.

And now we had time to realize that to-morrow was the glorious Fourth! But would it rain? That was the point of gloom in the bright prospect. It had been known in former years to do just such a diabolical thing. We cast an anxious eye at that barometer, The Peak, for the old fellow was in the habit of beckoning every cloud in the sky to come up his way until he had gathered enough together for a storm; but there was just one harmless little spray of cloud floating in the sunset, over his head, so we took heart of

hope. After supper we looked at the fireworks again, counted over the red, green and yellow Roman candles, probably the same kind which that noble Roman, Julius Caius Cæsar, used when he wrote his immortal Gallic Wars. Then there were the thin-shanked rockets and the bunches of Chinese crackers, piled up, with their queer celestial mottoes on the red paper, indicating the dialect which was spoken in Chicago where the crackers were made, but we firmly believed that they came from Peking, and that was where the American manufacturers got their cue, I've no doubt. After the inventory was finished, we decided to go immediately to bed, in the vain hope that we would go to sleep and it wouldn't seem so long till morning.

We woke up about four o'clock, and it flashed with a thrill to our hearts that this was the Fourth, as we heard the anvils going off in town. Hurrah for George Washington! The great day had arrived! We got dressed, or partly so, and rushed down-stairs and helped ourselves to a box of torpedoes apiece and banged them under the windows of the rooms where the rest of the family were asleep, or threw them against the stone spring house or at each other's feet. Then we went over to wake up our grandfather's family, to the full consciousness that this was the day we celebrate. After we thought they were sufficiently aroused, we started back, and just then a giant fire-cracker exploded near our feet and we didn't do a thing but jump. It was so sudden, as they say in novels. Our kind-hearted relative who threw it was

standing on the porch, and he seemed to enjoy our surprise immensely; but we subsequently got even with *him* by attaching a lighted bunch of firecrackers to his coat tail, and he made a lively and sparkling exhibition of himself.

Before breakfast was finished we heard a fusilade out by the front gate, and there were the boys from town and the surrounding country, firing crackers, pistols and torpedoes. Tom and I received an ovation as we came out on the porch to welcome our fellow-citizens, in the shape of torpedoes and bursting firecrackers thrown in our direction. After all hands had assisted in raising the big bunting flag over the house, we gathered in a group and took account of stock. Every boy had several bunches of firecrackers and a piece of slow burning punk, and we were further armed with cap pistols of bronze appearance, with a small pan in which the paper cap is placed, with a fat spot of powder in it, and it generally goes off in the ear of the boy who is not looking.

There was one very unhappy individual on the ranch that day: it was the part Newfoundland and part Scotch collie dog, Ben. I dare say it was the Scotch strain in him that made him so unpatriotic; for upon the first sputtering sound from the opening firecracker he was perfectly miserable, and he looked it. He tried every side of the house in search of peace. He would lie down in the shade with his nose against the gravel, trying to appear indifferent, but there was a furtive look in his usually honest brown eyes that indicated a disturbed spirit. And then a torpedo

would burst against the house and he would trot around to another side, only to be welcomed by a sputtering firecracker. Finally in sheer despair, he struck out for the woods with drooping tail and depressed head, and call as we would, he wouldn't even look back; for he had a firm purpose in his doggish mind, and that was to get out of that neighborhood immediately. And he didn't return until the morning of the fifth ushered in another era of peace.

We were not a bit reckless with our firecrackers, never firing off a whole bunch at once, and getting all the variety of fun we could with each particular cracker. Sometimes we put them under a can, and it would bounce up into the air, or pile up gravel around it, or put it in the hitching-post, or drop one into a boy's pocket where it might set a whole lot of others fighting. But the *pièce de résistance* for the morning was an old muzzle-loading rifle which Tom discovered in the workshop. We poured in about a foot of powder, then jammed a dozen wads down on the charge, and rammed it full of paper to the muzzle; and we felt reasonably sure of a grand explosion. The question was, where were we to shoot it off? for we had just enough sense not to hold it ourselves.

"Let's take it down in the pasture and tie it to the fence by the creek," suggested Jim.

This we did, and Tom fitted a brass cap, and tied a string to the trigger, and then got behind a stump. The rest of us were behind the cottonwood trees, waiting nervously for the tremendous crash, expecting

every moment to see pieces of iron flying through the air.

"Are you ready?" Tom yelled to himself. He was at all times a military man.

"Fire!" and then the hammer fell with a click, that was all, and the boy who had his fingers in his ears felt foolish.

"The blamed cap's wet," said Tom, and taking the cap box, he put on another, and getting back behind his stump, pulled the trigger. This time the cap did the rest. Crash! and the air was full of white smoke as if a park of artillery had just fired. We rushed up expecting to see the gun all broken, but it was a sturdy old piece and only the stock was blown off.

Just then Jim yelled: "Look out, there comes that old farmer with his dogs."

Sure enough, there he was tearing through the undergrowth with a pitchfork in his hand, and his two ugly dogs, one a cross, black brute, and the other a mongrel, were coming through the pasture towards us. Most of the boys made for the brush on the other side of the ditch, but there were two cottonwoods a little ways off and Jim and I started for them, and those dogs for us, the old fellow urging them on. On they rushed, and when the black one was about ten feet off, I reached the tree, and making a jump, caught a branch and swung my feet up just in time, for the dog made a leap that just missed me. Then he went for Jim, who was struggling up the trunk of his tree with much energy, and with a snarl grabbed him by his pants leg, and Jim let him have that part of his pants the

dog seemed most attached to. We climbed till we were way up on our separate trees and safely screened by the thick leaves and branches.

"Did he bite you, Jim?" I asked, "because if he did, you'll have hydrophobia and you'll go barking around like a dog."

Jim made a quick but searching examination of his leg.

"He didn't even scratch me," he said in a relieved tone.

Just then the old farmer came panting up.

"What you darned little rascals mean, shooting my cows?"

"We ain't shooting your old cows," I said.

"You needn't lie to me. This isn't the first time you fellers have done it either. One of my cows got filled with bird shot the other day. I'll fix you now, my young friends," he said, getting sarcastic.

"Say, mister, if you don't call off those dogs, my big brother'll lick you," said Jim; "there wasn't any shot in that gun anyhow, you old fool," he continued genially. The irate farmer made for Jim's tree and began jabbing through the branches to reach him, and Jim climbed up to a safer place where he could get a more commanding view.

"Say, Bill," he yelled, "there goes those boys. Run! run! you fellers, he's after you!"

I didn't see anything, but I took up the hue and cry.

"Sic 'em, sic 'em," shouted the old fellow, and away he went.

As soon as he was at a safe distance, we slid down

and made for the barn, where we found the other boys.

"What's the matter with your pants, Jim: tore 'em running away?" asked Ed Devon.

"You fellers needn't talk about running," I said, "the old man's dog bit Jim on the leg and he's going to have hydrophobia, and I began to back off from him. The sagacious Jim took the hint and began to growl ominously, and getting down on his hands, ran snarling towards Samivel, who took to his heels and ran towards the house, yelling for help. The rest of us scrambled up the ladder to the loft and armed ourselves with pitchforks, and looked anxiously down at our canine friend below. Jim had the barn floor all to himself and ran back and forth, growling, barking and snapping at everything and scaring the hens into fluttering fits. Once he started up the ladder and the boys got behind one another, trying to give the other fellow the preference of being in the front rank. But by and by Jim got tired of being the only dog in the manger, as it were, and resumed his human shape, and then how we geyed the boys! But they laugh best who laugh last, and Jim subsequently got very tired of being called "doggie," and told to "sic 'em" whenever the girls went past. He had many more fights than if he had remained a respectable dog, and it also came near breaking the friendship of a lifetime because he said I put him up to it. But these troubles belonged to the future, and that afternoon we had the right end of the joke, and we also had a very good time with artillery practise.

194 At the Foot of the Rockies.

We had manufactured two cannons by sawing an old octagonal gun barrel in two, and one piece was mounted on wooden wheels, while the other was simply fastened to a rectangular piece of wood and held in place by staples driven over the barrel. We had been very busy the week previous melting lead bullets.

"Let's shoot at the shed," said Jim.

So with a great flourish we dragged the small cannons around in front of the shed and unlimbered. Now this was a fine place to bombard, as it was built of heavy timber some thirty feet in length and about a foot and a half in thickness. They were originally bridge timbers, which a recent heavy flood had brought down on the ranch.

"We'll shoot at this," said Tom, pointing to a large yellow knot near the center of the middle log. "You fellers fire first," he said to Jim and his company.

So I put in a charge of powder and rammed in some paper and then dropped a bullet down the barrel. Jim took a piece of punk and lit a firecracker string which we used for a fuse. I jumped back, and bang it went and tumbled over on its back. We rushed up to see where we had hit, and there was the bullet imbedded in the thick timber about two feet to one side of the knot.

"You fellers couldn't hit a barn door," said Tom, scornfully. "Company A will show you how to shoot."

Very carefully Tom sighted and we stood behind him, looking on with interest. Sputter! bang! and his cannon flopped over. We rushed to the shed, which still seemed to be standing, unshaken, but not a bullet

scar could Tom find. He suggested that it might have gone through the hole where an iron bolt had once been, but we didn't agree with him.

"Here she is," yelled Jim, pointing to a small hole in the shed's roof, "you fellows are dandies!"

"'Tain't a bullet hole, either, it's a knot-hole," said the discomfited Tom.

"I'll bet you all the marbles I have in my pocket it's a bullet hole," said Jim.

We climbed up on the roof and examined the board, and sure enough, the splinters showed where the bullet had torn through.

"You couldn't hit a flock of barns if they were bunched," said Jim scornfully.

Our next shot went about two feet under the knot, and the next one was nowhere in the immediate vicinity of the mark; but as Company A was no better in their shooting, we didn't become discouraged.

"Say, boys, I believe it's going to rain," I said, casting an apprehensive look at the sky. It had grown overcast before we realized it; probably the severe bombardment had contributed to bring down the storm on us, which would spoil our fireworks in the evening. We looked anxiously at The Peak. Thank goodness! it was still uncovered, but those black clouds were sagging down almost against his bare and mighty crest, as he looked frowningly over his shield of mountains at the shadowed plains below; and soon we saw a white veil of rain way back of Ute Pass and there came a low growl of thunder that made our hearts sink to our boot heels.

Did you ever watch a rain-storm come slowly on that was to be the ruin of your hopes and expectations? It is like the torture of the thumb-screw getting tighter on you every minute. The night came on earlier, and also darker than usual, and we could see the rain already veiling the tops of the mountains; but still there was time, and perhaps an hour of grace would be given us, and we went into the house after the fireworks which was to be the crowning glory of the Fourth. Already the ball had opened, for up the valley we could see an occasional rocket wriggling up towards the sky, and from the town on the mesa they went up in increasing numbers.

The older folks and some of the neighbors sat in the dusk on the porch, waiting for operations to commence. My grandfather was telling about a celebration that occurred back in New York when he was a boy. Then the first rocket was placed in a slanting trough fixed on the ground, and then came that thrilling swish and up it went past the line of cottonwoods, up, up to the black clouds, then a soft burst of red and yellow stars! Ah! The next rocket was more erratic and was slow in starting, and with a trail of sparks went over into the garden. On the gate post we fixed the pin-wheels, so that the audience on the porch could see them, but as a rule they wouldn't spin and it became necessary to urge them along. Then the Roman candles flashed into the air in a brief glory of color, and we shot them at each other until we got orders to stop. To fill in the interval there was the crackling of bunches of firecrackers, which we now

wasted recklessly; and Jim had an old horse-pistol that he shot into the air, making racket enough for a regiment. Then the nigger-chasers, which we would place on the ground and light, would tear around and chase after us in the most unexpected manner without the least logic. One of them chased after the colored cook, who took it as a personal affront and was deeply aggrieved. But finally there came the last rocket, and none too soon, for the rain had commenced falling in big scattering drops and pattered more and more rapidly upon the tin roof of the spring house. Up it went into the rainy night and the brilliant sparks died out in the gloom, and the Fourth of July was over.

The next day we took a qualified pleasure in shooting off a stray squib that had escaped combustion on the Fourth. Oh, why had we not saved at least one bunch of crackers as a consolation prize for the inglorious fifth? But regrets were useless, so we made a collection of the burned-out Roman candles and hunted for fallen rocket sticks in the meadow.

AMONG OUR BOOKS.

By way of preamble, I may say that these were not school-books but works of a more interesting but possibly of a less useful nature. A boy's reading may be limited in range, but what he does read he enters entirely into the spirit of and makes his own without reservation. How vivid are the impressions left by our boyhood's books! Can you not see even now that naked footprint in the sand in Robinson Crusoe? Its impress is stamped upon our hearts with a sense of awful and lurking danger, and we feel that there would be quiet and safety no longer on that desert island for Robinson Crusoe, for there in the sand was the mark of the beast. And then there came the savage orgy of the cannibals as they danced in the red firelight, on that desert island, and their victims lay bound, waiting until their turn should come to be cooked and eaten. The scene was real in every fearful fiber of it, and the horror of it comes back to our memories from out the mists of forgetfulness with full force and effect; a horror, indeed, which even the perusal of the columns of the daily paper cannot inspire in our hearts now. In another book of our youthful reading we step from the common disenchanting light of every day

into the tempered gloom of a dark medieval wood; and there on a mound of grass we see the well-known figures of Gurth, the Swineherd, and Wamba, the jester; and our ears are strained to catch something that will strike a note of romance and chivalry, and we have not long to wait; for there comes the measured clang of metal striking against metal and the slow thud of horses' feet, and down one of the opening forest aisles ride two knights, with a small company behind them. One of them is clad in woven mail, that seems as easy on his powerful frame as though it was woven of soft and shining silk. By his dark and haughty features, we know full well it is the Templar, Brian de Bois-Guilbert. They ride on until the gloom of a stormy night threatens to overtake them; at last they halt at the place where the paths divide, marked by a sunken cross, and at its foot lies the figure of a man.

"Hugo, stir him with the butt end of thy lance," says Sir Brian.

It is done, but little do they guess whom they are stirring up, for this mysterious Palmer is one Wilfred of Ivanhoe. Then comes the never-to-be-forgotten day when we stand with the multitude pressing against the side ropes and watch the brave knights as they dash into the lists of Ashby-de-la-Zouche. In breathless interest we follow with our glance the slight but gallant figure of a knight in full armor, as he rides towards the end of the lists where hang the shields of the different combatants with various devices on their black surfaces. In sympathy for the

youthful stranger, we yell, "Touch Ralph de Somebody's shield, he's easy," but nothing heeding, he passes by one after the other, till he comes to one that bears the device of a black raven with outspread wings and a skull in his claws. On this shield he strikes a ringing blow with the point of his lance, and the clangor of the blow vibrates to our very hearts. Black scowls the Templar at the presumptuous youth who has dared to challenge him (just think of it, him!), Brian de Bois-Guilbert, the champion of all the champions. He orders a fresh horse and a new and unstrained lance, and piously commends the soul of his opponent to the care of the blessed Saints. It is going to be a good fight, we feel it in our bones; and so, indeed, it proved. Then on the next day comes the grand finale when De Bois-Guilbert and Ivanhoe chose up sides.

"I take fatty Athelstane," says Sir Brian.

"I choose the 'Black Slugger,'" says Ivanhoe, and so on, until everybody is chosen, even down to Ralph de Vipont.

At the signal the fight is on. Our hearts leap with the gallant knights, and when our leader reels in the saddle, we reel with him and recover as he grasps his battle-ax and, making a demivolt, crashes down upon his foe. But he is outnumbered; gallantly from point to point his charger carries him, now in a swift descent, now circling like a hawk; but down upon him like converging thunderbolts come Front de Bœuf and Athelstane! "Look out, look out," we yell, and all is but lost. Then on a sudden the Black Sluggard,

who has been loafing around the end of the lists, wakes up, and raising his voice in a growl like distant thunder, he rumbles, "Desdichado! Desdichado! to the rescue," and to the rescue it was; and soon all is over. The dust of battle drifts across the plain into the golden evening light. Our side has won—'tis well!

But it is not always so sanguinary. Sometimes we would take a stroll across the English fields or through the foggy streets of London with our friend, Charles Dickens, our small paws held in his large and kindly grasp. We would much rather hear him blow a cheery blast from the top of an English stage coach than to listen to a poet piping on his sylvan reed or the modern novelist beating on a very real but very unmusical tin pan. It is a rambling old English house, this one of Charles Dickens', with ivy climbing over the eaves, and pleasant stretches of lawn all around it. There are no dark and dirty corners in that house and little children are at perfect liberty to wander through it, and there will be no black ogres who, from lurking corners, will rush out to devour them body and soul. We meet such strange and interesting people as we wander through it. Ah, there comes our friend, Mr. Feeder, B. A., he of the bony hand and upright hair which well match his character, in spite of the reckless nature of his amatory poetry. We also meet little Paul Dombey, going up-stairs with his school-books piled up to his chin, and the top one tumbles off, and he laboriously picks it up and starts again. We watch him as he struggles up the thorny

pathway which leads to the Temple of Knowledge, where sits no Goddess but an old maid with spectacles. We sympathized with him, for we too were overloaded with Latin grammars, mathematics and such like, and were also very apt to go into a sad decline, brought on by over-study—at least so we thought—but our parents and teachers, indeed, seemed in no wise alarmed and, in fact, we paid far more attention to Mr. Dickens' description of Pickwick's adventures, than to Caius Julius' account of how he licked the Gauls. There is another character in this book which we remember distinctly, to-wit: one Cornelia Blimber. Blimber! What a name! It suited her exactly, and we could just hear the tones of her dry, rasping voice when she said, "Now, Dombey, when you have perfected yourself in instalment one, you may take up," etc., etc. Well, we hated her; for we had a teacher just like her, precisely. But when little Dombey got sick, she was very kind, and our hearts relented towards her somewhat. And then came the end, when the golden river whose reflection he saw gliding on the wall of his sickroom, bore the child away, even from the detaining grasp of his dear sister's hand; and as we read a lump rose in our throats that quite choked us. Years afterward we came across what some real smart men had to say about Dickens, and they told us that this pathos was false and that our sighs had been foolish as well as vain. I dare say they are right, but possibly we might be quite willing to exchange the wonderful critical acumen which we possess at the present time for a

little of that freshness of feeling which made Dickens' despised pathos very real to us.

After a while, perchance, we run across Kingsley's "Hypatia." We read the opening chapter, and as though by a stroke of a magician's wand, the dull nineteenth century disappears and we are living in that wonderful and wicked world of the fourth century, with its Christians and heathens, Goths and Romans. We meet that strange and wily prelate, Cyril of Alexandria, and also the hunting bishop whose name I forget, who combined the sport of pursuing ostriches with his clerical duties, and whose apostolic mantle seems to have fallen on some of the rural clergy of modern England. And above all there was that remarkable Hebrew, Eben Ezra. How we did enjoy his cool cynicism in the face of the enraged Roman Prefect, and his soliloquies seemed wonderfully clever and witty to us. Then there chances to come along a certain Englishman, named Stephens, whose intellect possessed the dry radiance of an electric light, and he glances at the book before us and laughs sneeringly at Eben Ezra and immediately the spell vanishes.

There is no doubt but that certain critics are to literature what the Devil was to Paradise. At one stroke of their disenchanting wand "the glorious palaces, the solemn temples," crumble to dull, realistic dust, and the ruddy wine of romance which we raised to our thirsty lips becomes pale and thin as water.

Not infrequently the circumstances under which we read a book in our youth becomes a part of it, and

forms a frame for it forever after in our memory. I recall the conditions very vividly under which I began to read David Copperfield. It was a wet, snowy afternoon in November, with the flakes melting as soon as they fell on the red roof of the barn and on the wet gravel, but adhering in clammy whiteness to the fences and to the branches of the trees, and looking up through the window pane, they took on a dull leaden hue, as they came thickly down. Inside the room a fire was burning on the grate, and before many minutes had passed, I lost all consciousness of the storm and was bending with David Copperfield and the faithful Pegotty over that wonderful Crocodile Book, and Davy's mother was seated sewing by the small table. But soon the domestic idyl was broken by a man, a certain Mr. Murdstone. I could see him just as plainly as I see you, in fact, more so, with his pale face set in black whiskers, a sort of genteel highwayman, who stole Davy's mother. Then there was Miss Jane Murdstone, his sister. There is nothing yielding in that name, and, indeed, she was a Tartar. But to even things up there was that delightful old creature, Barkis, and his expression that "Barkis is willin'" was in years gone by a phrase of common speech. And after a while there came the school with a dark ugly yard and a dull school-room, dominated by a Mr. Creakle. That name expresses his character all right. The gloom of those school days was lightened by the fat Tommy Traddles, who drew skeletons on his slate. Heaven bless the youthful Traddles, we shall never forget him!

As I read on, the winter dusk had come quickly down and the ghosts of the frozen raindrops were flitting before the window panes, while the wind was beginning to howl over the chimney; but for me the storm was in the background and I was going along the English lanes with David Copperfield, who was running away from his cruel stepfather to the home where lived his aunt Betsy Trotwood, of historic fame. It was growing so dark that I found it necessary to turn so that the flickering fire would fall on the page, and by this illumination I managed to reach the place where Betsy Trotwood, with her shrill war-cry of "Janet, donkeys!" rushed out and routed the detestable Murdstones. How it warmed the heart to hear her as she turned fiercely on Miss Murdstone and said, "Let me see you ride a donkey across my green again, and as sure as you have a head upon your shoulders, I'll knock your bonnet off and tread upon it!!" There's defiance for you! It was in just such tones that St. George addressed the dragon. By the time I had reached this exciting episode, the fire had died out, and it became necessary for me to go down-stairs after more wood to liven it up, and I stepped out into the whirling storm with the glow of the novelist's fancy still warm around me.

There is another story that has for me a setting well suited to the wildness and romance of the theme. It was one of George MacDonald's, "Warlock o' Glen-warlock." Its very title was fragrant of romance as a pine is of resin. It happened that three of us boys were camping out for a week in the mountains where

a cañon broadened out into a beautiful little mountain park, as a narrow brawling stream widens into a limpid pool. One day we planned a climb up Old Baldy, but a thunder-storm came up early in the morning, frowning blackly over the darkened range, and in a short time it came on to rain steadily, so we had to give it up. It was dreary sitting in the cabin. The other two boys, finding nothing better to do, rolled into their bunks and went to sleep. Outside it was gray, chilly and uncomfortable; but luckily for me, I found in a pile of discarded "Seaside Novels," behind the door, this story of MacDonald's, and in a brief time I was no longer in the Rocky Mountains, but in the far off Highlands of Scotland. My very first glimpse was of a boy and girl struggling sturdily through a fierce snow-storm. By and by they came to a coach stuck fast in a drift, and inside there was a wicked old nobleman and his beautiful daughter, whose sadness and charm linger long in the memory. The children brought the two travelers to the castle of the boy's grandfather, a poor but proud and upright man, who does all he can for the querulous old nobleman. The Scotch lad in the course of the visitors' enforced stay, grows to worship the fair lady—her name has escaped me, but we will say of Glenwarlock, for that is bound to be her ultimate title, if I know anything of romances. I read on and on until by the middle of the afternoon I had reached the chapter about the hidden treasure, which was found by the aid of a mysterious cane, a stone was removed and a secret staircase discovered that led to

an underground vault,—this is as I remember it,—and a chest was discovered full of yellow Spanish doubloons, that had been collected by a pirate ancestor (a virtuoso of such coins) of the Laird of Glenwarlock. The gloom of the rapidly descending night almost shut out the page, and I hurried on to the close, where the Scotch boy had grown to sturdy manhood, and after passing through storms of jealousy and misunderstanding, in the golden light at the end of the book, the beautiful lady and Warlock of Glenwarlock were happily married. The book was finished and the day had gone as quickly as though one hour had swallowed the others, and I sat for a while looking out into the rainy gloom, where the gray clouds trailed along the mountain slopes; yet my eyes were filled with the glamour of the romance I had been reading and I saw not the gloomy night outside, and neither did the other two boys, for they were snoring sweetly.

Often a boy enjoys a book the more for having to read it in snatches, say behind the cover of his geography at school, or perhaps in the summer time when he is working in the hay-field and a smart shower drives him indoors and this gives him a chance to take up his Indian story, and in a second he is lying comfortably on the sofa or rug, with the exciting book that he had to leave just at the most interesting place. Times like these are oases in the desert of our pilgrimage or are like bright rainbows athwart this vale of tears. I remember one summer morning in particular when I and the hired man scattered the wet alfalfa shocks out on the ground and then left them for the

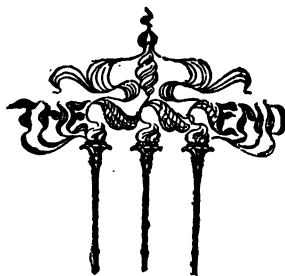
Colorado sun to do the rest, and indeed I wished that he would be longer about it than he seemed inclined to be, for this was just the time I wanted to finish that very thrilling book about the Indians and the United States soldiers. I found the book snugly hidden under a pile of sofa cushions in the parlor, while Tom was looking for it in the library.

"It's my turn to read it," he said, "you had it all last night."

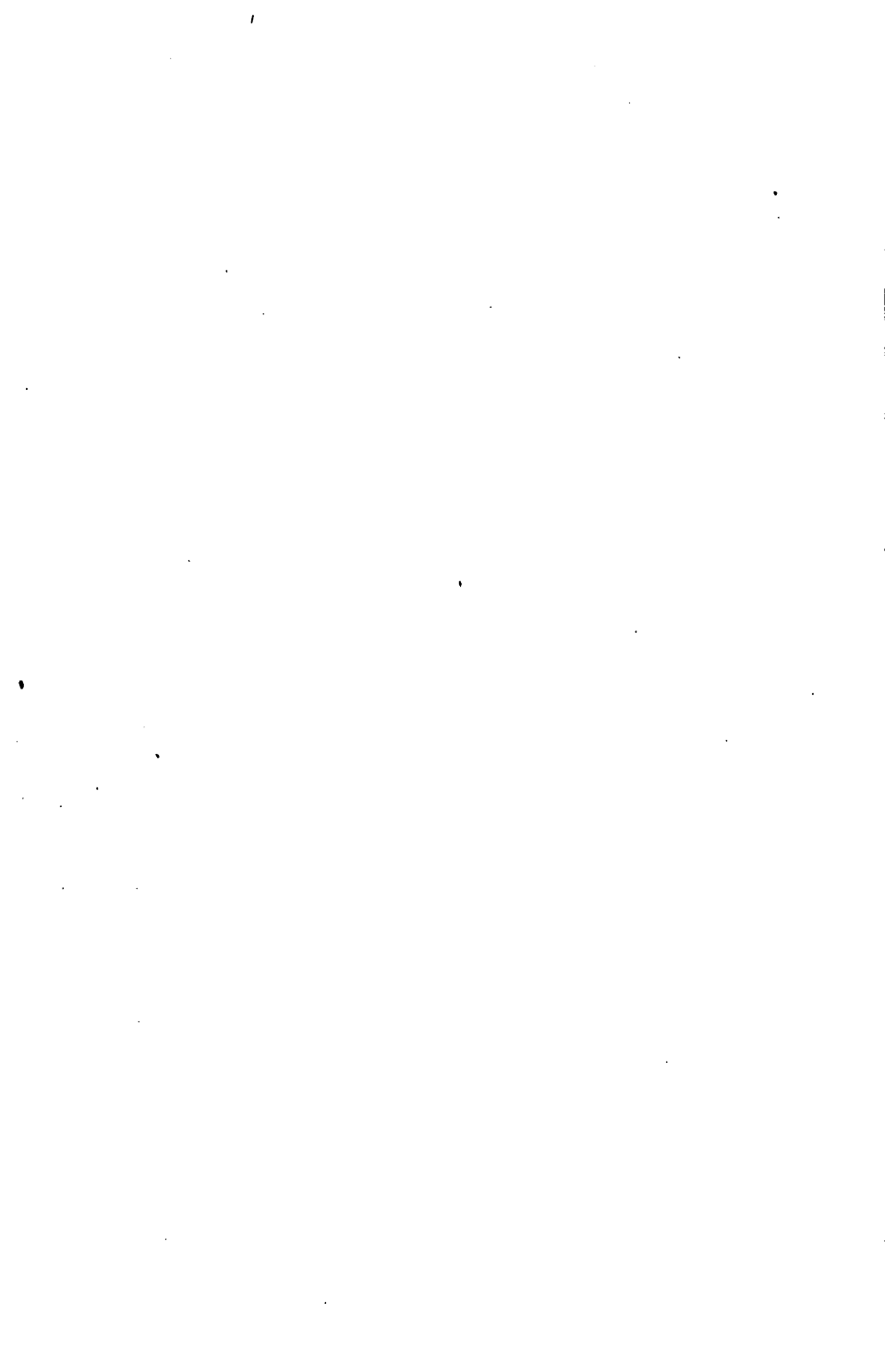
"Finders keepers, losers weepers," I replied jocosely.

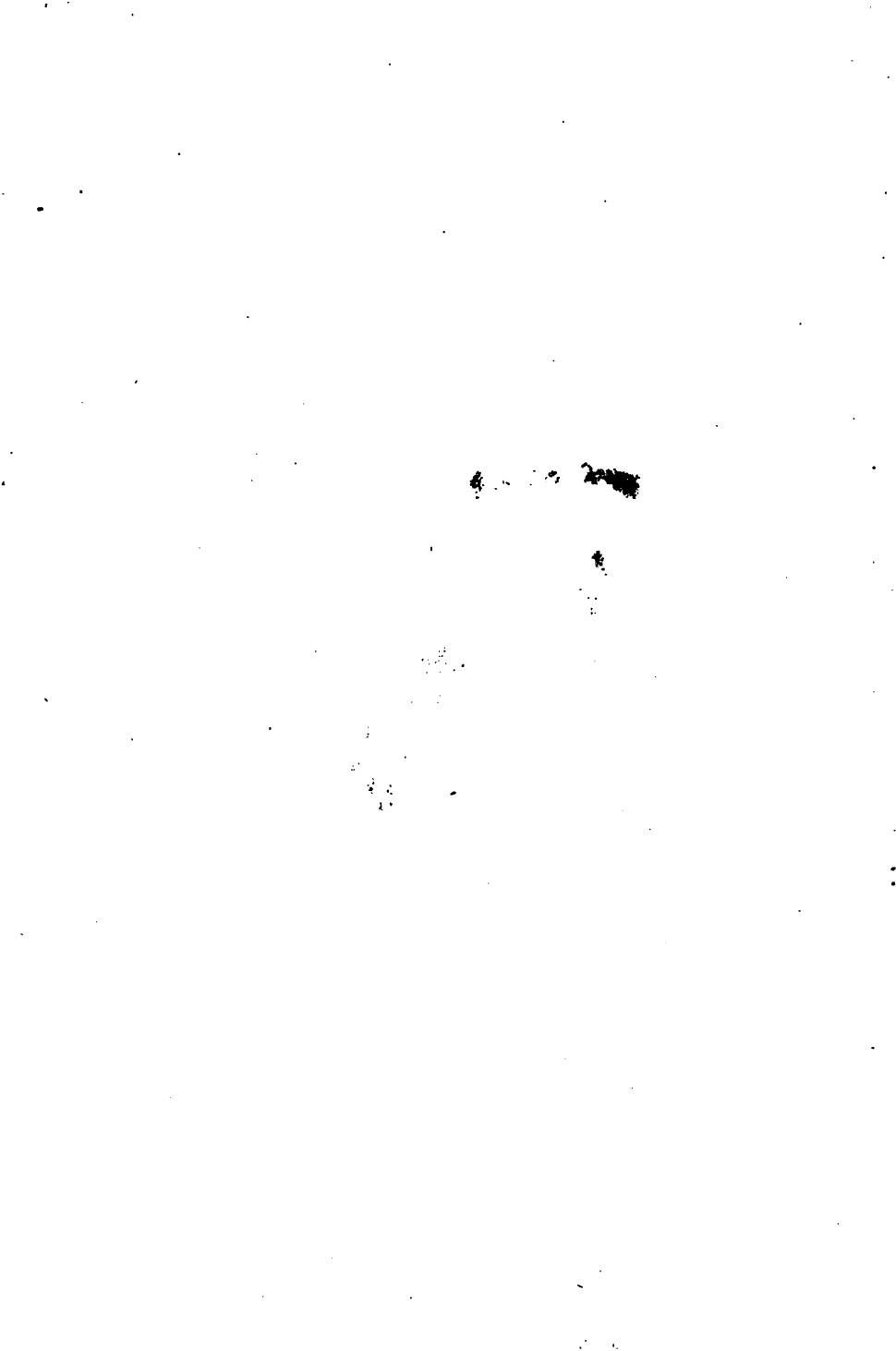
While Tom was laying the matter before the higher authorities as to who was legally entitled to the afore-said book, I stole out of the house and concealing myself behind a large cottonwood on the lawn, began to read. Pretty soon I heard Tom's voice from the porch. "Oh, Bill, mother says you're to let me have that book. I see you hiding all right." But he didn't see me,—that was a bluff,—and so I kept on with my reading, and by this time things were getting so desperate that if Tom wanted that book he would certainly have to fight for it. You see the Sioux had surrounded a small body of United States Regulars. It was the sixth night that they had been besieged out on the desolate plains and the water supply was getting low, and several of the men were badly wounded. It was imperative that word should be got at once to the army post of the desperate situation. A young lieutenant volunteered to make the effort to get through. His horse was a very intelligent animal, swift as the wind, and obedient to every word of his master. No

saddle was put on the animal, only a blanket strapped securely by a surcingle, and his shoes had been removed so no alarm could be given to the Indians by the striking of the iron on the gravel or stones. The lieutenant was lightly clad in dark blue trousers and flannel shirt of the same color, and his revolver was ready in his hand. Then he sprang on his horse, and with a strong grip of his hand to the captain, he rode cautiously away. It was a starry night and a light breeze was whispering over the plains. For a short distance he rode down a gully and then came out on the plains. Ah, what was that! A party of braves were coming along the bank of the gully straight towards him. With every muscle tense he waited, ready for the dash that must come, and then—hang it!—I heard the wagon come rattling out of the barn floor, and my time was up. But there was one satisfaction, namely, that the lieutenant was a United States Regular, and he was bound to get through somehow.









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